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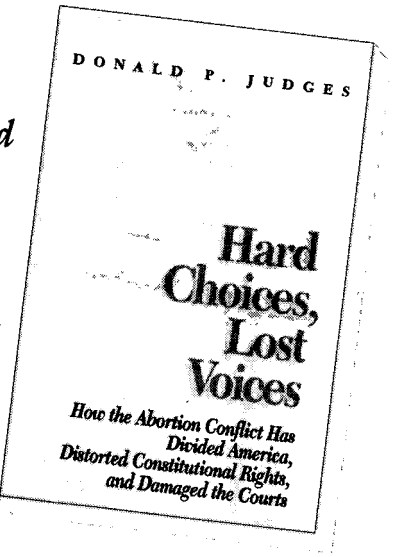
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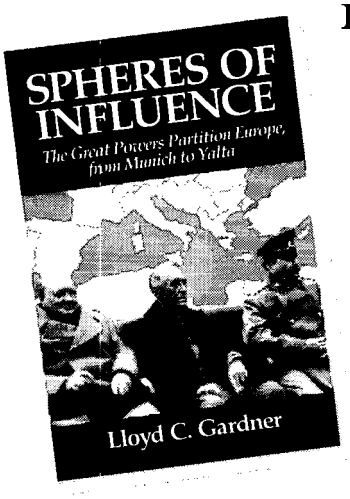

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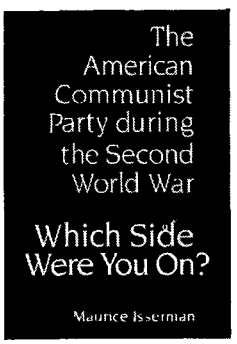

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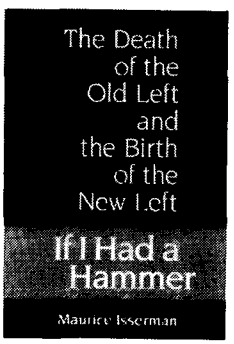

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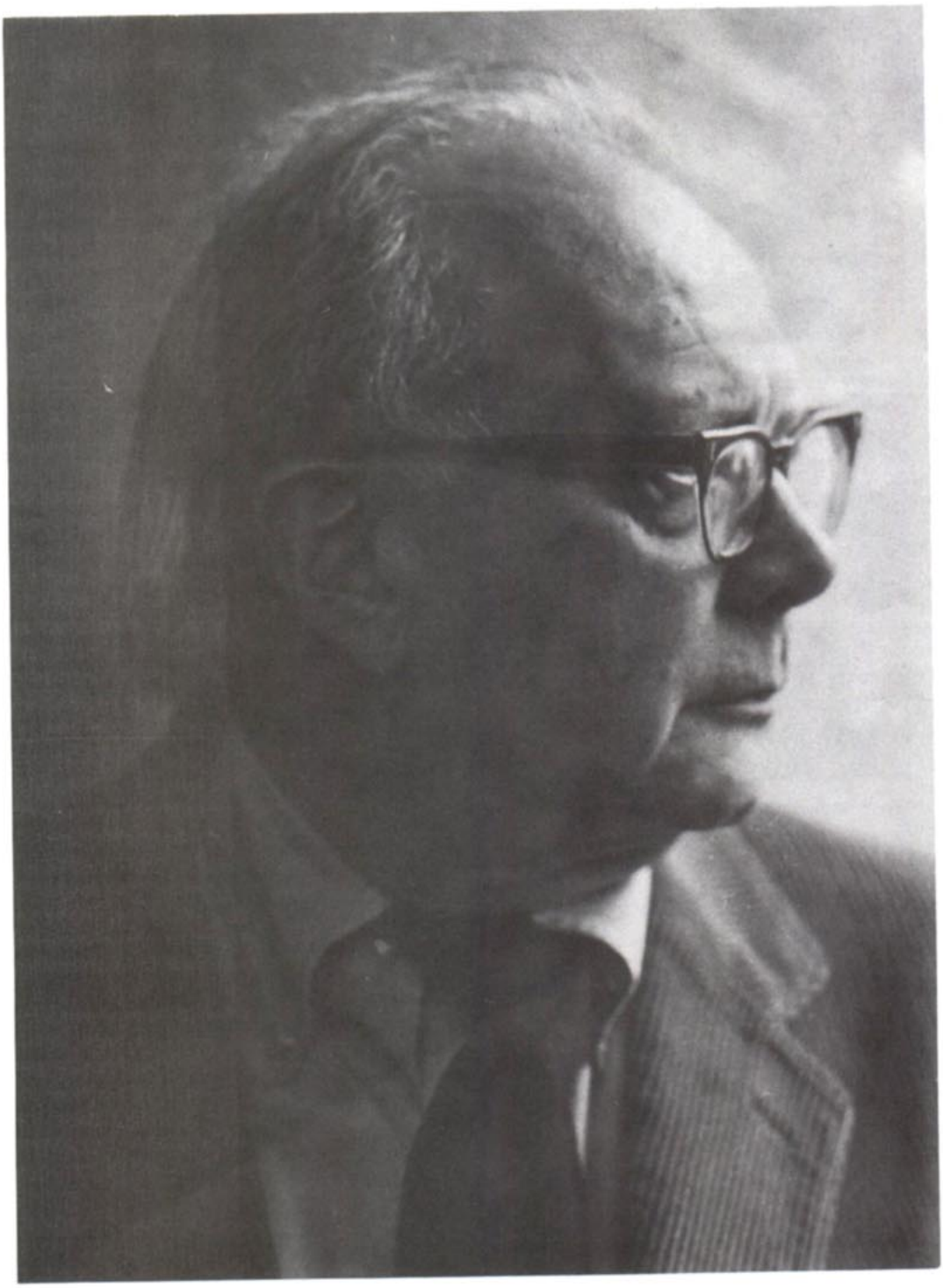

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IRVING HOWE
1920–1993

Our friend and comrade Irving Howe is dead.

The world knew him as the leading intellectual of the American left, a voice (often, a voice in the wilderness) for democratic and socialist values.

We knew him differently. He was our voice (it's our wilderness). And he did not only speak for us but also to us and with us. I know that voice; it's in my bones. What I want to talk about here is its tone and timbre and its message. I don't mean its ideological message, Irving's doctrine, for despite his Marxist training, he was never doctrinaire, never an ideologue. "Socialism," he and Lew Coser wrote in one of the early issues of *Dissent*, "is the name of our desire." He was driven by a passion, not an ideology. He was politically committed like a man in love: attuned to the needs of the hour, to the actual experience of political life.

Irving taught us to argue and to worry. Most of us, I suppose, never worried enough, because we always knew that he was worrying. Worrying steadily, worrying with a purpose, for he was also, stubbornly and strangely and sometimes luminously, hopeful. He exemplified what is in fact very rare, though it is much talked about: Antonio Gramsci's "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will."

He knew the awfulness of politics in the twentieth century, and he spoke about it with a clarity unmatched among left intellectuals, absolutely free of sentimentality and wishfulness. And he hoped for something better, his own utopia, nothing extravagant, only a world more attractive, and he spoke about that with a cheerful resiliency. He acknowledged a grim reality and resisted it with high spirits—with wit, not rancor. His words were often cutting, but they left clean wounds.

He never looked for disciples, only for friends and comrades—because he was a man of the left and a committed democrat. I doubt that he possessed the common touch, but he had the necessary negatives: an absolute absence of pretension and arrogance, a deep dislike for political vanguards and ideological gurus. He never aspired to stand at the head of a party or sect, only in the center of a loose circle of people like-minded enough to argue and worry together. And here we are, his circle, postmodern now, decentered, but committed by our presence here to keep on arguing and worrying together.

In forty years of *Dissent*, forty years of political dissidence, there was never a split. There were some wonderful, some not-so-wonderful battles, but no factional wars. Individuals slipped away; no one stormed out. How did this happen? Not by chance. Many people have spoken these last days about Irving's abrasiveness, no one about his diplomacy. His abrasiveness came naturally, as naturally as his intelligence. The diplomacy was work; it was his hardest and steadiest work. When he disagreed, he said so; when an article was bad, he rejected it; when the language was flaccid, repetitious, dull, he cut and edited, insisted on revisions. He defended not only a linguistic style but a morality of plain speaking. And when he was engaged in that defense, he had little respect for the tender egos of our motley crew of writers, academics, and activists. But he had an abiding kindness for the people (well, most of the people) behind the egos. And after the disagreement or the rejection or the editorial ruthlessness, there would be a note, a phone call, a lunch, an invitation to write again.

When leftist intellectuals made themselves into apologists for tyranny, or when they broke the ties that bind us all to people in trouble and became apologists for privilege and power, Irving was ready enough with contempt and condemnation. But his own left was nonetheless tolerant and open. There

Michael Walzer gave these remarks at a memorial service for Irving Howe held in New York City on May 24, 1993.

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was a lot of room—not always enough people to fill the room, but we were never crowded into a corner; we breathed free, without inquisitions, party lines, or ideologically correct positions. And the price of this freedom was Irving's sweat and blood. Some of us helped, now and then; he never stopped.

I often asked myself: why did a man of such high talent, so cultured, so insightful, who used the English language with such power, devote himself for forty years, day in, day out, to this political/diplomatic/editorial drudgery? Why the endless phone calls? (I think that we spoke on the phone some two thousand five hundred times over thirty-five years, and that cannot have been a tenth, not a fiftieth of the calls he made: no wonder he never said good-bye!) Why the constant fund raising, which he was never good at and certainly never enjoyed? Why the stream of notes and postcards, suggesting projects, reminding us of deadlines, hammered out one after another, every day, while the essays he wanted to write and the books he wanted to read lay waiting? Why the endless editing of other people's prose, which he could easily have handed off or neglected entirely as most editors of most magazines do?

I never asked him those questions. The admiration (and the guilt) that they reveal would have embarrassed both of us. But I didn't have to ask them. The answer is the man, a man of the left and a socialist, who knew that this work, exactly this work, was what we were here for, that we did not have to finish it but could not give it up, that someone had to pay attention even to the smallest matters—and if someone, then us, then him. Intelligence and culture brought no entitlement to withdrawal or quietude or contemplative leisure in Irving's world, not even in his more attractive world.

So he worked and argued and worried. I have dwelt on these affairs of every day because they are so important: the good life is in the details. I know that Irving Howe was a major literary critic; I know that he was a towering figure. But he didn't live, so to speak, upstairs in the tower. He lived, by choice, on the ground floor, with his friends and comrades—because he was a man of the left and a *mensch*. It was a great joy to live there with him for a while.

MICHAEL WALZER □

IRVING HOWE MEMORIAL FUND

A Memorial Fund has been established in Irving Howe's name. A generous contributor has offered a matching grant of $10,000, so that every dollar sent by our readers will be doubled. We ask you to help us meet that grant . . . and more. The proceeds from the fund will help keep *Dissent* on a strong foundation, and will also enable us to embark on special projects, some of which were planned by Irving before he died.

In our Fall issue we will list the names of all contributors.

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Jared Bernstein

RETHINKING WELFARE REFORM

Reform of the nation's primary system of cash aid to the poor—Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)—is again on the political agenda. That this is happening so soon after the last wave of reform (which resulted in the Family Support Act of 1988) suggests the intractable nature of the problem. This time, the centerpiece of reform is the idea of a two-year time limit on the welfare rolls.

Does welfare really need reform? How do liberal and conservative notions of reform differ? Where have past reforms failed?

The first striking historical point about welfare is how different its current mandate is from its original charge. Created in 1935 as part of the New Deal, Aid to Dependent Children (as it was first called) was essentially the federalization of state programs of mothers' pensions. In contrast to the current emphasis tying welfare to employment, early advocates of welfare were primarily interested in breaking the dependency that single-mother families had on their children's labor. The initial goal was to keep both mother and child *out* of the work force.

Starting in the mid-1960s, welfare rights organizations and progressive lawyers helped to make AFDC more accessible than ever before. Close to 90 percent of eligible families sought assistance, indicating that both the stigma associated with welfare receipt and the usual administrative hassles had been relaxed. In addition, the average benefit grew about 35 percent between 1960 and 1970.

Under the Reagan administration's 1981 budget, as many as five hundred thousand families were cut from the rolls. The war on welfare had begun. Benefits fell in real terms starting around 1970 (by 1992 they had fallen 43 percent) and eligibility rules were tightened. "Welfare dependency" became the focus of both political and academic debate.

The question of welfare dependency is relative. Although I consider it socially appropriate to use welfare as a safety net for families in economic trouble, someone else may believe that such use encourages excessive dependence on government largesse. Approximately half of AFDC recipients use welfare episodically, while a minority (between 17 and 30 percent, depending on definitional differences) are on the rolls for eight years or more. However, over half (between 50 and 60 percent) of those on the rolls at any given time are from this long-term group.

These percentages reveal two important points. First, since only about one-quarter of those on welfare receive benefits for long periods of time, the dependency problem has been overstated by critics. But the long-termers are the most costly recipients to maintain, since they dominate the caseload at any given point in time. A policy that eliminated them from the rolls would generate the greatest savings (leaving aside its social costs). Yet these numbers can only inform, not answer, the question of welfare dependency.

As Christopher Jencks asks in the Fall 1992 *American Prospect*, what is so terrible about dependency on the government anyway? Jencks notes: "The elderly certainly don't complain about it much." There are many families throughout the income scale who depend on government transfers of one type or another, and at a much greater cost than AFDC. For example, tax expenditures from deductions for interest on home mortgages were 3.1 percent of federal spending in 1992, while spending on AFDC was less than 1 percent of federal spending (the average state share was slightly more than 1 percent of average state expenditures). Moreover, non-welfare transfer recipients typically receive benefits for extended periods: in the case of deductible mortgage interest payments, for the life of the loan; in the case of subsidies to farmers, there are no time limits.

The popular critique of dependency on welfare depends on who's doing the criticizing. From the right, two related critiques have emerged. The first, associated with Charles Murray, suggests that welfare is the problem, not the solution. These critics see welfare as a perverse force that decreases

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the labor supply and increases immorality by encouraging out-of-wedlock births and single-parent families. Their solution: end the system, or at least cut it drastically. A similar critique, associated with Lawrence Mead, also maintains that welfare leads to moral decline; but interestingly, Mead's solution involves *more* government—he recommends public policies to enforce employment, and his recommendations have been taken seriously by policy makers.

Most liberal policy makers also appear to accept the proposition that welfare dependency is an important problem. However, they believe that dependency is caused by structural factors, such as unequal educational and job opportunities, which put certain persons at a disadvantage. This leads liberals to the human-capital solution (that is, expanding recipients' earning capacity). The last stab at reform, the Family Support Act of 1988 (in large part the work of Senator Moynihan) had a substantial training component, but one that has never been seriously funded. The current administration also has adopted the human capital rhetoric; in addition, as noted above, there is a discussion of imposing a two-year time limit on welfare receipt.

The welfare debate poses two questions. First, is dependency the problem it is made out to be? And second, what results can we expect from the proposed solutions of human-capital investment and time limits?

The fiscal argument against dependency seems weak given the size of the expenditures relative to other, more popular, transfer programs. If we assume eight years of uninterrupted welfare receipt as an arbitrary definition of dependency, we find that eliminating spending on such cases in 1991 would have saved something like $12 billion, or 0.7 percent of total government expenditures. This does not imply that welfare dependency, if it is truly a social problem, ought to be ignored, only that the fiscal return from eliminating it will be relatively small. In addition, these savings must be balanced against the increased social costs—from homelessness, illness, crime—that will inevitably follow when benefits and services are withdrawn. (For instance, early studies from states that have eliminated general assistance programs [welfare generally for single men] have found that increased costs of criminal justice have outpaced the welfare savings.)

The moral argument is hollow for a number of reasons. Why should the morals of welfare recipients be a topic for social analysis any more than those of farmers or homeowners? Why are certain departures from private market outcomes uncritically accepted, while scholars write extensively about the morals of welfare recipients who fail to live by the market? Certainly, many people bilk the public purse, some through the welfare system. Such transgressions are no more or less acceptable if the offender is a welfare recipient, a defense contractor, or CEO whose inflated salary package has no relation to firm performance (a case of a less-than-moral *private* market outcome).

It is undoubtedly true that some single mothers would rather be on welfare than work. Yet it is far from clear that anything immoral is going on. In fact, an economist might consider this the rational choice, given the constraints of her earning capacity, child-care costs, and home-care responsibilities.

Liberal welfare reformers would prefer that poor persons not have the choice of removing themselves from the labor market for long periods. Today the popular proposal is to take the welfare option away, at least after a prescribed time period. But few seem to have thought through the implications of such a policy. What, for example, will we do about those mothers (and there are sure to be more than a few) who either cannot or will not seek employment? Surely, we won't let them and their children starve.

What can we expect from welfare reform based on work requirements and time limits? Unless a single mother on welfare can find a job that pays her a net wage (after work-related expenses) comparable to her welfare budget, including food stamps and medical coverage, we should expect her to resist being forced into the labor market. Liberal reformers have realized this and place welfare-to-work job training at the center of their reform efforts.

Controlled experiments have found that training programs can have long-term benefits. Former recipients raise their earnings capacity to the point where they are better off than they were on welfare. Experiments from the mid-1980s found that recipients who received training gained earnings increases 10 to 20 percent above those who did not. Since these earnings led to reductions in benefits, there were also welfare savings for states (though usually less than 10 percent). Enemies of dependency add to this happy ending an increased level of self-esteem, as former recipients are more fulfilled.

It sounds simple, but of course it's not. These programs are initially very expensive. Also, although the average welfare payment only affords a poverty-level lifestyle, it takes a decent paying job with family health insurance coverage to match the welfare package plus pay job-related expenses (like

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child care and transportation). Few entry-level, service-sector jobs provide this level of compensation. Most welfare-to-work programs, severely strapped for funds, have become nothing more than employment referral services, referring recipients to the lowest paying service sector jobs.

Welfare reform, as currently conceived, fails to come to grips with the nature of the contemporary labor market. While the median wage fell by 4.9 percent between 1979 and 1989, the average hourly wages of entry-level workers with a high-school education (persons with one to five years of experience in the labor force) fell much further, by 13.5 percent for females and 22.4 percent for males. For high-school dropouts, the wage loss was even greater. (The average welfare recipient has less education than the average worker.)

Perhaps the most relevant wage analysis concerns black female entry-level workers, with high school educations or less, since this group is disproportionately represented on the welfare rolls. The evidence shows low wage levels and sharp wage decline experienced by this group. Between 1979 and 1989, high school graduates in the group saw their wages fall 16.7 percent; over the full period a worker in this group lost 25.3 percent of her hourly wage, on average. For high school dropouts, the percentage decline is less, but the levels are lower. In 1991, a mother of two children who was employed full time, full year at $5.13 per hour would have earned about $2,000 more (before taxes, some part of which would be rebated to her) than she would have received through the combination of AFDC and food stamps. This surplus would have to cover child care and health insurance, unlikely to be provided by her low-paying job.

These declining wage trends result directly from the economic policies of the past twelve years. The real minimum wage has fallen 30 percent since 1979. Union membership, long associated with decent wages, has precipitously declined. Lax trade policies have put U.S. production workers in competition with workers in other countries who work for a fraction of their wage.

We are in the midst of a sluggish recovery with spotty job growth. Unemployment is historically high for a recovery. Meanwhile, many, if not most, firms continue to reduce the size of their workforce, a trend that began in the late 1980s. Many firms are also hiring part-time and temporary workers as a way to avoid fringe benefit costs.

The combination of increased output (GDP grew at an annual rate of 4.8 percent in the fourth quarter of 1992) and decreased demand for labor has led to the high productivity numbers of the last few quarters. But as economist Lawrence Mishel has pointed out, this increased productivity is a mixed blessing. It should eventually lead to wage growth and better living standards for those producing more efficiently, but it means that GDP has to grow a lot faster if we are to employ additional workers, including those who would be pushed off the welfare rolls. It also suggests substantial competition for the jobs that are offered, putting an additional burden on welfare-to-work training programs.

Concern with these economic trends, the result of structural deficiencies in the U.S. economy, have been conspicuously absent from the welfare debate. All Americans in the labor force, be they white collar or blue collar, are facing a slack labor market characterized by skittish firms and falling wages. In addition, public sector spending is constrained, at least politically, by the deficit. Is this the time to be forcing persons who are at a distinct disadvantage into the labor market?

Any serious welfare reform based on welfare-to-work must face up to the fact that the contemporary labor force is failing many blue- and white-collar workers with years of experience and education. In this climate, it is unrealistic to force welfare mothers off the rolls or to impose a time limit on welfare. Other policy options, like wage subsidies or enforcing child-support payments, would be useful, but these, too, are constrained by fiscal and labor market realities. Instead of clamoring for reform that is ill-suited to the realities of the current market, let us accept that we are buying some temporary well-being for those who need it.

In the meantime, we can correct the labor-market policies that have depressed wages for the majority of workers over the last decade. We can pursue minimum-wage, trade, tax, and labor policies to ameliorate the income inequalities that characterized the 1980s. Once this is undertaken, we can turn again to welfare reform, with the serious intention of investing in the future of welfare recipients, so they too might prosper from an equitable economy. □

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Joanne Barkan

ITALY: CORRUPTION METASTASIZED

What boggles the mind is not the pervasiveness of corruption in Italian society, but its thorough institutionalization. So when magistrates exposed the nature of the rot (their ongoing inquiry began in early 1992), perhaps no one should have been surprised that the political system fell apart and that both state and economy were threatened. Some observers applaud the process; Italy needed a total shake-up. But sensible folks, especially leftists, also worry about what will fill the political void and whether the left will survive in decent shape.

Many Americans find it difficult to fathom how Italy functioned (or malfunctioned) and why an investigation should rock an entire system. A quick sketch of one pervasive type of corruption may help to clarify the picture. It's based on testimony given to magistrates in Milan and reported in the magazine *L'Espresso* (May 23, 1993). (Although the following story focuses on the now disbanded Italian Communist party, it should be noted that the Communists were involved in relatively few cases of corruption compared to other parties and that none of the current cases has yet gone to trial.)

"Alternative Party Financing"

It's 1986, and the Communist party, like other major political players, gets its man onto the board of directors of the state railway system. He acts as intermediary between the treasurer at Rome party headquarters and the director of the consortium of "red" cooperatives in the construction industry. The Communist railway board member guarantees that 20 percent of all construction contracts will go to "friendly" co-ops. From the director of the construction consortium, he gets the names of companies that will "compete" for each contract. He gives these names to the party treasurer. He then asks representatives of the construction companies to drop by the office of the party treasurer in Rome with their "contributions."

The procedure is flexible. Sometimes the railway board member deals with companies outside the network of cooperatives, including major corporations such as Fiat. Sometimes contributions take the form of extravagant numbers of subscriptions to *L'Unità,* the party newspaper, or advertising at a party festival. Sometimes the money comes as cash in an envelope; sometimes it's deposited in a Viennese bank.

Meanwhile—and this is perhaps the most striking feature of the system—the contracts not handled by the Communist board member fall to the other party representatives on the board in proportions agreed upon by all.

To finish this sketch of the so-called "alternative system of party financing," just multiply the railway board scenario by the total number of government contracts offered in every domain, from the cleaning of nursing homes to the procurement of electrical power and personalized stationery to the construction of sports stadiums and highways. Finally toss in the fact that some agencies regularly paid for goods and services never delivered and construction never completed.

This was "kleptocracy" Italian-style—the relentless, systematic rip-off of an entire society. It fed on a more fundamental organization of postwar Italian life known as the *partitocrazia* (party-ocracy) in which the political parties over the course of four decades engulfed government, state, and economy.

The party-ocracy functioned somewhat like the *nomenklatura* system of the former Soviet Union where Communist bosses and functionaries determined who got the job, the apartment, the truckload of cucumbers. To be sure, Italians live in a pluralistic democracy where civil liberties are protected. But political machines gained a stranglehold on daily life. Since many parties shared the spoils, the institutions of civil society and the economy were sliced into pieces like so many pies. When a position at the University of Rome in, say, microbiology became available, party loyalists (who had divided up all previous jobs) decided which political group was in line to fill the new post ("As if there were such a thing as a Christian Democratic microbe!" a friend of mine once railed).

Italian democracy of the cold war era provided fertile ground for the party-ocracy for several

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reasons. The immense Communist party (second in strength only to the Christian Democrats) was not allowed to govern at the national level. This rule of the game, certified by the U.S. State Department, deprived Italy of the alternation of office holders that characterizes most other democracies. The Christian Democrats established a permanent regime. (Consider what might become of the Republican party in the United States if the Democrats, no matter how many votes they won, could never occupy the White House.)

Italy's unrestricted form of proportional representation aggravated the situation. Parliament regularly housed a dozen or more squabbling parties, which made for unstable coalitions and favored trafficking in state goodies—contracts, jobs, and power. And last, the state ran the banking system and acquired over time almost 50 percent of large industry and a chunk of other economic activities. The political manipulation and corruption metastasized, becoming a national disease.

Everyone knew at least something about it. Most Italians now claim to be shocked by the extent and routinization of the corruption as revealed by the never-ending investigation. So far, magistrates have arrested or put under investigation more than 2,500 business people and politicians, including over 200 deputies in Parliament. Citizens seem to be particularly upset by revelations that the "pillars of society" such as Fiat and Olivetti have been handing over bribes like everyone else.

Last winter, new information tying major political figures to organized crime (of the mafia sort) further rattled Italians. Although talk linking Christian Democrats in southern Italy to the underworld has been around for decades, several *mafiosi* cooperating with the state created a sensation when they testified about former prime-minister-many-times-over Giulio Andreotti. There was the question of the infamous *bacio*: did Andreotti or did he not meet with and kiss superboss Totò Riina? It's doubtful that a court will convict Andreotti on the basis of an ex-*mafioso*'s testimony (which is why Andreotti asked to have his parliamentary immunity lifted), but the specter of such intimate relations wrecked what little confidence people still had in politicians.

Public Pressure

In the parliamentary elections of April 1992, voters punished the old guard of the party-ocracy (Christian Democrats, Socialists, former Communists, and Social Democrats). Some observers expected the parties to get the message, but they couldn't stop bickering in Parliament long enough to heed the growing demand for reform. Or they ignored what they heard because reform means giving up power and privilege.

Public pressure for a series of referenda mounted, and when Italians voted in April 1993, they pretty much closed the book on Italy's first republic. On the most significant question—instituting a winner-takes-all (single member district) electoral system for most Senate seats—an astounding 82.7 percent voted yes. Everyone understood that the yes vote on Senate reform was shorthand for three demands: equivalent electoral reform for the Chamber of Deputies, an end to party-ocracy, and new faces on the political scene.

Now would the old crop of pols get it? No. Just eleven days after the referendum, the Chamber of Deputies voted by secret ballot not to lift the parliamentary immunity of former Socialist party secretary Bettino Craxi, who is under investigation in over a dozen corruption cases. People took to the streets to protest the vote. One group stood with a noose outside the luxury hotel where Craxi sojourns in Rome.

The demonstrations reminded anyone who needed reminding that Italy must get sweeping change in order to refurbish its democracy. Most immediately what's required is comprehensive electoral reform followed quickly by voting. A new Parliament would, one hopes, have a stable and politically coherent majority that could address problems of massive structural unemployment, industrial restructuring, suffocating national debt, and an overhaul of social services.

Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, former governor of the Bank of Italy, heads up the current cabinet approved by Parliament shortly after the referendum. He hopes to have an electoral law passed by the end of the summer, with balloting to take place soon after that. Still, many commentators despair of seeing electoral reform. They doubt that the squabblers in the Chamber will agree on a law. Some parties know that they'll drop off the map under a winner-takes-all system; some parliamentarians want another year on the job in order to collect a pension.

In the meantime, both the Christian Democratic and Socialist parties are collapsing under the pressure of the corruption investigations. The secretary of each group has called for a constituent congress that would give birth to a new formation with a new name. Many pundits already put the

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Social Democratic and Liberal parties in the zombie category—dead but still walking around.

Lots of "Things"

The prospect of winner-takes-all elections has set off a frenzied effort to redraw the political map. Every day brings new proposals for broad alliances that might compete more effectively in a system that will reward only the largest vote-getter. The terminology these days harks back to 1990 when the Communist party proposed dissolving itself in order to be reborn as a broad left force, popularly known as the Thing (*la Cosa*). Now various pols have proposed the White Thing (a new Catholic party), the Black Thing (a right-wing coalition including the neofascists), and the Pink Thing (a centrist reformist thing). Another proposal, which this writer can't resist mentioning, has been named after a cartoon character called Eta Beta who has a big brain and a pocket full of solutions to all problems. This notion of a reformist group is the creation of former Prime Minister Giuliano Amato who, because of his diminutive stature and large ears, is known all over Europe as "Topolino," which is Italian for Mickey Mouse.

For the moment, the most serious effort seems to be the Democratic Alliance, which brings together activists who worked for the yes vote in the referendum, some progressive Catholics, ex-Socialists, some members of the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS, which is one successor to the Communist party), and various Greens. The organizers of the Alliance (like almost all of Italy's political movers) have concerned themselves more with recruiting notables and carving out a niche than defining policies. At an upcoming convention, however, they plan to begin developing a program.

Mario Segni—ex-Christian Democrat, architect of the referendum campaign, and one of the few politicians with widespread support in Italy—recently joined the Democratic Alliance. Some leftists worry that he will shift it to the right, which makes their own decision about affiliation problematic. More generally, and with some justification, they fear that the current political upheaval could produce a large centrist bloc, which would prevent the left from becoming a majoritarian force.

As the political map gets redrawn with new coalitions, much of the left is busy doing what seems to come naturally—self-destructing. PDS secretary Achille Occhetto is losing a three-year battle to hold together his party (the largest on the left). Some of these ex-Communists want to join with left Socialists or ex-Socialists; others have hooked up with the Democratic Alliance; Occhetto inclines to equivocation. In mid-May, he lived through one of his worst nightmares: the historic leader of the Communist left, Pietro Ingrao, quit the PDS. There's now a risk of major hemorrhaging from the party's more radical side.

To complete this list of woes, the corruption investigations have smudged the party's long-time reputation for clean hands. For the first time, former Communists/PDSers are implicated in major scandals. Local activists who believed their party to be fundamentally different from the others feel betrayed.

Italian leftists always hoped to transform a corrupt order radically by winning elections and implementing fine programs. The system is collapsing at last, but who can take, or wants, credit for the implosion? The people will vote eventually under revised laws, and at that point, they'll usher in a new era. No one can describe its content or spirit yet. With the political class in rout and the left unable to rally, Italy stumbles forward into something unknown. □

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Bogdan Denitch

STOP THE GENOCIDE IN BOSNIA

MAY 22, 1993

Genocides are inconvenient for preoccupied statesmen, who have worries of their own. They happen at the wrong places and the wrong times. Those who argue that the destruction of Bosnia cannot be called an act of genocide ignore the fact that genocide is never neat and total. Not all Armenians were killed in the genocide of 1915; some Jews and Gypsies survived the Holocaust; a substantial Serbian population survived in Croatia and Bosnia after the Ustashi genocide of 1942–1944. All these genocides were inconvenient at the time to American and other Allied statesmen, who had other priorities. So the Armenians were not saved, the death camps were not bombed, and the Jewish refugees who were allowed to leave fascist Romania were turned away by the British authorities in Palestine—sent back to die.

The silences and implicit complicities with past genocides have added to a moral burden for postwar Western Europe and the United States that has never been lifted. Books are still being published about the collaboration with the Nazis of the Vichy French, Dutch civil servants, even the local British authorities in the occupied Channel Islands. And yet until very late in the game it was possible to deny that it was even happening. The allied political leaders, press, and wartime propaganda did little to break the veil of silence.

Today the mass media, especially television, have changed all that. Denial of atrocities is very difficult: destruction of cities, masses of civilian corpses, blinded and crippled children are daily on our television screens. These events are products of human agency and actions that were shaped by the European Community and our past and present administrations. They could have prevented this from happening. Instead, every imaginable strategy has been used to avoid doing something to stop the war and the destruction of the Bosnian Moslem Slavs as a community.

An obscene carnage in Bosnia, including the genocide against its Moslems, has taken place even as we have been commemorating the Holocaust. There is a thick stench of hypocrisy in the air. Croatian President Tudjman, a clumsy "revisionist" historian who has repeatedly minimized the number of Jewish and Serbian victims of the Croatian Fascists during the Second World War, is invited, at the suggestion of the State Department, we are told, to the Holocaust commemoration in Washington. This at the same moment when his troops were copying their Serbian rivals in murderous "ethnic cleansing" of Bosnian Moslems in central Bosnia and Herzegovina. The person most responsible for the Bosnian and Croatian wars as well as the destruction of Yugoslavia, the Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic, is being recast as a force for peace. His last-minute tactical decision to press the Bosnian Serbs to sign the Vance-Owen peace agreement is turning this Balkan bully into a "dove."

Throughout May the destruction of the multicommunal city Mostar as a result of the fighting between the Moslems and Croats graced our television screens. The Bosnian Serbs continued their war against the culture of their Moslem fellow Slavs by wantonly destroying two priceless sixteenth-century mosques in their main city, Banja Luka. Nobody even bothered to protest.

The Clinton administration's record here is shameful. It follows the Bush administration's cowardly failure to deal with Serbian aggression and the other disastrous consequences of the breakup of Yugoslavia. Lest we forget, there already *was* an intervention in Yugoslavia when, for good or for ill, the European Community and the United States agreed to the breakup of that multi-ethnic state and followed Germany's lead in prematurely recognizing Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina in their unilateral secessions. This was done against the *explicit* advice of Lord Carrington, the first mediator appointed by the European community, who cau-

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tioned that no new state emerging out of Yugoslavia should be recognized before an overall negotiated settlement that would deal with issues of minority rights, property division, and other disputed questions. His good advice was ignored and war inevitably followed.

On what basis did the European Community choose to recognize secession from Yugoslavia? The stated reason was that a referendum supporting secession would be held. The Bosnian Serbian referendum was of course a political farce, with a wholly predictable result. But the Croatian referendum on independence was hardly a model exercise in popular deliberation either. It was worded so that the word secession did not even appear. Croat emigrés from Canada, Australia, and Germany voted; many Serbian citizens of Croatia could not. After all, said the noted Croatian nationalist writer Vlado Gotovac at the heavily boycotted PEN Congress held this April in Dubrovnik, "Since when is tribalism a crime?" This sentiment was echoed by that noted writer, Croatian President Tudjman, in his attack on sterile internationalism and rotten cosmopolitanism at that same congress. This post-ideological and postmodern celebration of national identity in Croatia has mightily helped prolong and widen the war, since it reinforced Serbian tribalism.

What clearly was not on offer in Croatia was a civic state of all citizens regardless of national identity. It was on offer in Bosnia—and that is why the two nationalist tribes had to destroy the Bosnian state. A secession should only be supported if it includes credible human and minority rights guarantees, freedom of speech and assembly, and access to media. That is, a civil state, not a tribal state. That was hardly the case in Croatia. Yet the European Community hastened to recognize the breakup of Yugoslavia, rather than pressing for democratization and further decentralization of the country, which in retrospect would have been much the lesser evil.

It is absurd for the European Community and the United States to claim that they have no responsibility for the catastrophe in former Yugoslavia. It may be convenient to say that the war is merely an obscure Balkan ritual arising inevitably out of age-old hatreds, but this ignores the near half century of reasonable communal coexistence in Yugoslavia, above all in Bosnia-Herzegovina. For that matter, except during the Second World War under the sponsorship of occupying fascist powers, there is no history whatsoever of war between Serbs and Croats. On the other hand, there is a century-and-a-half-long history of efforts by Croats, Serbs, and Moslems to create a union of south Slav peoples, a Yugoslavia, much to the annoyance of the then established powers.

The present administration's record on former Yugoslavia consists of the constant evasion of decisions and the creation of a near crisis in the U.S. relationship to its West European allies. This mixture of cowardice and incompetence is exacerbated by the military's public mugging of the president and his proposed policy. Clinton's personal style does not help: he appears unwilling to use the White House to educate the public about policies he wants to pursue. There is a constant attempt to shift responsibility elsewhere—anywhere: to the Congress, to the weak-kneed European allies, to a public reluctant to support intervention in Bosnia.

Why should there be any such support? What has the White House done to mobilize public support or even to inform the public or the Congress about the issues involved?

Secretary of State Warren Christopher was given an impossible task: to convince the Europeans and Canadians to follow a flawed and unspecified policy for unworkable goals by a United States that would not even commit ground troops to the existing UN peacekeeping force. Nor does it help that Clinton's secretary of state looks and sounds like a lawyer all too aware of the weakness of his case, and that his military establishment is emphatically not on board.

Why should the European allies follow an American leadership that is obviously unsure of what it wants to do about Bosnia, except that it wants to "lead"? The policy the White House has suggested (that is the strongest word one can use) is obviously flawed and, worse, directed toward the wrong aims. The proposed Clinton policy would begin with the arming of the Bosnian government forces, move on to air strikes to protect these forces, and then possibly protect the remaining Bosnian cities by taking out the attacking artillery and declaring the cities safety zones. All this would presumably increase the pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to sign the Vance-Owen peace plan. Once the agreement was ratified the United States would help police it. The United States's ability to argue for any policy of its own has been fatally weakened by its refusal to have its own troops participate in the UN peace forces. That refusal seems to be Washington's only coherent policy.

The Vance-Owen plan is an unworkable and immoral proposal to accept the main demand of the

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Serbian and Croatian nationalists and divide Bosnia into ten ghettoized Bantustans, called provinces. The plan would further create a permanently powerless Bosnian government with equal representation from the nationalist leaders of all three communities. As far as the Vance-Owen plan is concerned, Bosnian citizens, whatever their own desires, exist only as members of three communities: Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Moslems. This despite the fact that 28 percent of the families are intermarried and large numbers of the urban young and secular citizens do not consider themselves communally identified. Further, the plan gives as many provinces (three) to the Croats, who number roughly 16 percent of the population, as to the Moslems, who number around 42 percent. Most urban cosmopolitans are more comfortable under Bosnian (mostly Moslem) rule than under either Croat or Serb nationalists, who are notoriously intolerant. The very worst feature of the plan is the certainty that it would lead to further "ethnic cleansing" under its dominant nationalists of each proposed Bantustan.

Enforcement of this plan would be very expensive and would require around 70,000 troops—and it is doomed to fail even so. No solution that proposes "ethnically pure" boundaries is remotely viable: it runs against the reality of constant population shifts, intermarriage, and the fact that the cities in Bosnia are impossibly heterogeneous. It will lead to later wars to correct present injustices. Given all the obvious flaws of the Vance-Owen plan the real question is: why was it allowed to paralyze all other initiatives and draw out the agony of Bosnia for more than a year? Was it a deliberate delay to allow the Serbs and Croats to get what they wanted and thus satiate the appetites of their nationalists? Or was it another case of arrogant ignorance and incompetence along with a cronyish respect for Vance and Owen in their respective diplomatic establishments?

The Serbian-controlled rump Yugoslav government and the accused war criminals representing the so-called Serbian republic of Bosnia have proved masters of endless delay, giving the UN, the "West," and two U.S. administrations what they really wanted—the illusion of progress toward some kind of peace settlement, even an unfair one. Vance and Owen have warned repeatedly that any action whatsoever to stop the continued Serb or Croat military aggression would interfere with the peace process. This coincided with the European Community's reluctance to take any firm measures to deal with the disaster it has helped bring about. Its constant copout has been that it waited for Washington to assert leadership. That was safe, since leadership is a scarce commodity in Washington. During this misbegotten peace process, Serbian and Croatian nationalists have torn Bosnia apart, killing and raping tens of thousands.

At each new UN-sponsored truce there is less of Bosnia and thousands more uprooted refugees. At times the alibi for doing nothing was that it would jeopardize our friends in Moscow. There was always something. However, even with the best efforts and endless delays, the stubborn Bosnian Moslems refuse to vanish and thus remove this embarrassment. Substantial sentiment in both the European Community and the United States wished the damn Serbs would get it over with, finish off the Bosnian resistance, so the world could go on with more important business.

The central claim of the Serbian and Croatian nationalists was that it's impossible for the different national communities to live together in one state. Through year-long atrocities, organized mass rape, and destruction of cities, mainly by the Serbian forces, they made this a self-fulfilling prophecy. By late May the United States had moved to a scandalous position, accepting a division of Bosnia into three ethnic states within the boundaries established by Serbian and Croatian aggression. The United States is ready to use air power only to protect UN peacekeeping troops, which will not be joined by any U.S. contingents. In the face of this cowardly betrayal of minimal decency the democratic community must raise its voice. It may be too late to save Bosnia, but we must at least act to save the Bosnians.

The Bosnians—this is not a war among Serbs, Croats, and Moslems. The backers of the Bosnian government include not only Moslem Slavs but many urban Serbs and Croats as well as those in mixed marriages, other minorities, and all those who refuse to be ghettoized into tribal reservations. Since this probably includes much of the urban population, something can be done to save lives now.

The most important thing to do in Bosnia is to *immediately* protect the civilian population. That can be done by establishing Assertive Safe Havens in the major cities of Bosnia, protected by the UN forces with a new mandate: to actively protect the civilian population. Not just the "Moslems," but all civilians. U.S. ground troops should join the UN peace forces, which should be under UN command and control, perhaps delegated to NATO. This is the essence of the French recommendation. This is the essence of the unwelcome and suppressed recommendation of the last

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commission of experts the Clinton administration sent to Bosnia. It is also a proposal backed by many citizens' groups. The UN took some halting steps in that direction by May 1993, a year too late.

The protected zones should be established without negotiations with any of the local authorities. The UN forces should disarm all persons within these zones, provide international (UN) supervision for the judiciary and police forces, and aggressively protect these zones from attack. This also means that the UN troops should forcibly remove all artillery threatening the safe zones. The zones would also include some cities presently under Serbian or Croatian authority. Most Bosnians live in cities today and thus could be effectively protected by the same number of UN troops called for in the Vance-Owen plan, roughly fifty thousand to seventy thousand. After some time, with adequate protection, civil society and civic institutions should emerge in the safety zones. Then democratic elections can elect genuine representatives of the Bosnians, who can begin participating in the determination of their destiny. That destiny has now been abandoned to the self-elected tribal leaders.

The United States should also immediately take in a fair share of refugees and victims of this war. We should press other European nations to at least match Germany, which took in more than a quarter million, or Sweden, which took in sixty thousand. There are other measures that are urgently needed. The first and unavoidable step to give credibility to any proposals whatsoever is to carry out air strikes against Serbian forces besieging Sarajevo and threatening Tuzla if they do not stop their aggression. There is no "right" to besiege cities. It is probably true that these strikes will only remove a major part of the Serbian artillery, but the message is also political. It is to signal that the delaying games are over.

Help Democratic Socialists in Croatia

The democratic socialist Social Democratic Union (SDU) of Croatia, headed by Professor Branko Horvat, faces continued repression by both the authorities and informally organized superpatriots. Its initial organizing convention in the spring of 1992 was broken up by thugs and then prohibited by the police for "safety reasons."

Throughout the summer election campaign for the Croatian Parliament the SDU candidates were exposed to intimidation. On December 17 one of SDU's trade union leaders, Milan Krivokuca, a member of the party's executive committee, was stabbed to death on his doorstep. The police did not find the guilty parties, but a statement was issued to the effect that this was not a politically motivated crime! In January of this year one of SDU's candidates for local elections was suddenly mobilized and, although previously classified as an army telephonist because of poor eyesight, was reclassified as a sniper and sent directly into the enemy line of fire. Two SDU members had their cars dynamited in front of their homes in January 1993. A campaign to dismiss a leading tenured SDU member, Professor Milan Pupavac, as well as a well-known friend, Professor Zarko Puhovski, is now underway in the Faculty of Philosophy of Zagreb, previously a stronghold of Marxist-humanist praxis. SDU's members have been dismissed from jobs in the media, the economy, and civil service. They have been arbitrarily denied citizenship papers together with masses of Albanian, Serbian, and Gypsy long-time residents of Croatia. The party has great problems in finding places willing to rent space for meetings and in raising even minimal funds to keep its paper and activities going. It desperately needs help from friends abroad. Even worse repression takes place in Serbia, particularly in Kosovo, and horrible violations of human rights and mass rape take place in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Nevertheless we ask *Dissent* readers and sympathizers to help our fellow democratic leftists in Croatia because it is essential for any prospect of a decent postwar society that democratic socialist, nonnationalist organizations survive. Help should be sent to:

Institute for Democratic Socialism
15 Dutch Street, Rm. 500
New York, N.Y. 10038

Checks should be made payable to: IDS-Yugoslavia Fund, and they are tax deductible.

—B.D. □

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An ultimatum should follow to all armies in Bosnia—Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian—to deliver their armored units and artillery to UN control or immediately withdraw them; otherwise they will become legitimate targets for air attacks. That would lower the level of violence and be a step toward a gradual disarmament of all troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina, except for a gendarmerie to deal with what will obviously be widespread banditry in that country. The thousands of young thugs in the militias will not give up their arms to go on unemployment lines easily. Second, for mostly symbolic reasons, to make clear the distinction between the legitimate government and the aggressors, the Bosnian government should be given the right to obtain light and anti-tank arms. These should be airlifted to the Sarajevo and Tuzla airports.

We need continual international pressure, including the threat of sanctions, against Croat aggression in central Bosnia, not only because it has been largely unnoted and unpunished, but also because pressure against the Croats would make pressure against the Bosnian Serbs more credible. All aggression in the area, all attempts to change borders by force, and all "ethnic cleansing" must be resisted. Ignoring Croat complicity in Bosnia has not been helpful. We must end the war in the Balkans and begin developing reliable international instruments to prevent similar wars.

President Clinton has delayed difficult decisions and created bad precedents. He has also allowed the military to trespass into civilian policy areas. The present military doctrine, that we go into nothing but near total wars and only under our own command and control, is an arrogation of presidential policy prerogatives. It is also a bad policy, shaped by the experiences of Vietnam. We need to help create genuine international forces under UN direction that can intervene in the dirty brush wars and low-intensity ethnic conflicts that are likely in the next decade or two: an international police force. The military hates the very idea. The endless delay in formulating a credible U.S. policy must stop. The Clinton presidency itself will be seriously injured if it proves paralyzed whenever it needs to act. The genocide in Bosnia must be unconditionally stopped. This is both a moral and policy imperative. □

Paul Hirst

BRITAIN'S ROAD TO DISASTER

Margaret Thatcher managed to persuade the world at large, and conventional opinion in the United States, that her government had engineered the economic recovery and social transformation of Britain. That was a carefully contrived illusion, and for a while it was given the semblance of reality by the irresponsible policies that produced the credit-fueled boom of the mid-1980s. It has fallen to her successor, John Major, to inherit the crisis created by Conservative policy. Major won the April 1992 general election with a majority of twenty MPs, against the expectations of informed opinion. He thus saddled the Conservatives with governing in a period when the accumulated results of their thirteen years of misrule became inescapable. Some Conservatives would have liked to leave a weak minority Labour government to bear the consequences of the hard decisions that need to be made, and then to fall, leaving the right to return in triumph. This is what happened in 1974–79. For once the Conservatives have inherited an economic crisis of their own making.

No government in modern British history has so quickly created an impression of utter incompetence as has Major's administration. Many voters in 1992 seem to have decided at the last minute to play safe and switch back to the Tories. They voted for competent economic management in the face of a severe recession, and for political stability instead of the dangers of a hung Parliament with no majority. So far they have got neither competence nor stability.

The first of their failures was in macro-economic management. The Major administration persisted at

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first in defending the indefensible, that is, a suicidally over-valued currency that was wrecking domestic employment and output in manufacturing. The core of the government's policy since late 1990 was membership in the European Community's currency system, the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM). This was set at a target rate of 2.95 Deutsch marks (DM) to the pound. The aim of this policy was to promote monetary stability and to reduce inflation. It achieved the latter, but did so by so damaging the real economy that it undermined the long-run stability of the exchange rate. This promoted speculation that the value of the pound would fall and led to uncontrollable volatility in the money markets. Under the ERM Britain has suffered its worst slump since the 1930s *and* a major devaluation.

It was Major, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, who persuaded Thatcher in the autumn of 1990 to abandon her long-held opposition to ERM membership and to go in at 2.95 DM. In late August 1992 it was obvious to virtually everyone that Britain had to devalue or face ruin. Major and his bumbling chancellor, Norman Lamont, stubbornly refused to do so. A government whose core wisdom was "You cannot buck the market" refused to listen to the markets and blamed the weakness of sterling on "speculators." Lamont spurned a German offer to realign the currencies within the ERM. Britain was then forced to devalue and leave the ERM on Black Wednesday (Sept 16, 1992), when the tide of selling finally threatened to exhaust the government's foreign currency reserves. This blunder cost the UK some £5 billion. Britain devalued by some 20 to 25 percent. It has virtually wrecked the ERM in doing so, and helped to set back the European Community's program of monetary union. The government abandoned its sole policy for national economic management, but Lamont refused to resign, and Major feebly tried to blame the Germans.

Even as it was squandering Britain's foreign exchange reserves, the government committed itself to closing thirty-one coal mines, or about 60 percent of Britain's remaining capacity. This decision was a direct consequence of the government's ill-considered privatization of the nationalized electricity supply industry. The new private companies rapidly committed themselves to a long-term contract that substituted natural gas for coal. This contract will make Britain dependent on imported gas in the twenty-first century, even though it has vast coal reserves. The shortsightedness of this measure was so staggering that it caused a wave of revulsion throughout the country. Even the Tory shires were moved to violent anger, and MPs like Winston Churchill (nephew of the wartime leader) went into open revolt. Well-heeled shoppers in London's plush Mayfair district applauded the massive (250,000 plus) union-sponsored demonstration against the closures. A government that can restore the reputation of miners' leader Arthur Scargill, defeated by Thatcher in the prolonged and bitter miners' strike of 1984–85, is clearly in dire trouble.

In late March the government attempted to buy off its own rebels with a two-year subsidy that may save twelve mines. This may work, but the fiasco over the mines has undermined the government's credibility. Its crass errors were by no means at an end with the mine closures. In later 1991 Britain had negotiated its own version of the Maastricht Treaty on further European union. It refused to sign the Social Charter, a package designed to ensure common employee rights and standards of social provision in the European Community, and opted out of the goal of rapid progress toward a single European Community currency. Despite diluting the treaty by obstructive bargaining and gaining exemption from key parts of it, Major could not convince the anti-European fringe of his own party that further European integration was acceptable on any terms.

Having a majority of only twenty seats, the government had become vulnerable to its own anti-European rebels. It had antagonized the pro-European Labour party by rejecting the Social Charter. Labour committed itself late in 1992 to opposing the passage of the bill incorporating the relevant parts of the treaty into UK law. The Maastricht Bill is unlikely to be ratified before the summer and Britain is now seen in Europe as not really committed to the Community. Major has created the impression that he is so inflexible he cannot do a deal with the opposition parties to get the treaty through and so weak that he cannot control his own rebellious MPs.

This chaotic government is now widely despised, not merely by opponents but by many previous supporters in business and the media. Major and Lamont have become figures of fun. The danger is that this is a sign the public may be turning against the political process. Politicians are increasingly regarded with contempt, as dishonest, second-rate careerists. Public opinion increasingly despairs of what government can deliver at a time when the country needs effective action to tackle the slump and assist the revitalization of manufacturing industry. The government is unlikely to fall, but it is almost certain to drift.

By the end of the 1990s Britain will be part of the poorest third of the European Community. In 1973, despite the relative industrial decline, it was still in the top third, roughly comparable to France and

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West Germany. In the later 1980s it was overtaken in GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per capita by Italy. Soon it will be overtaken by Spain. If one had proposed this scenario in 1945, Britons would have fallen about laughing. Britain's current economic problems are structural more than cyclical. A modest recovery of consumer confidence will not lead to sustained growth. Britain's growth rate in the 1980s was actually below the long-term rate in the 1950s and 1960s, itself low by the standards of Germany and France. The severe recessions of 1979–83 and the early 1990s have led to a loss of a substantial part of Britain's manufacturing capacity. In the 1980s industrial output increased substantially in most advanced industrial countries, whereas in Britain manufacturing output in 1987 had only returned to the level of 1979, and it is currently only 8 percent above 1979 levels.

Britain's manufacturing sector is in far worse shape than that of the USA, and its poor performance has led to an inbuilt tendency to a chronic deficit in the balance of trade. Bluntly put, Britain's manufacturing sector is about 25 percent too small for the country's living standards. The current trade deficit is running at about £12+ billion per annum. Britain has lost whole industrial sectors and its remaining industries are heavily dependent on the import of components and semi-manufacturers.

In the 1980s Britain's growth depended on an unsustainable expansion of consumer credit, on a hyper-inflating housing market, on inflationary wage rises, and on cuts in direct taxation sustained by oil revenues and receipts from privatization. The 1980s registered massive expansions of capacity in financial services, commercial property, and the retail sector. Services experienced a major investment boom. But this growth was unsustainable once the consumer boom burst and left the country with about 25 percent surplus capacity in these sectors relative to real economic performance. Britain had no shortage of capital, rather it was misapplied by distorted market-driven priorities in investment. The current recession, unlike the one of the early 1980s, has been particularly severe in the south of the country and in white-collar unemployment. Already there are the beginnings of serious unemployment in hitherto immune areas such as banking.

The only way that Britain's structural trade deficit can be sustained is by attracting short-term foreign capital. Yet even this short-term expedient may prove impossible if sterling becomes perceived as a weak and volatile currency, which is likely. Then the only option will be to raise interest rates to attract foreign *rentiers*. But such rates will cripple manufacturing investment and, therefore, long-term economic performance. The inevitable result will be a tendency for living standards to fall relative to those of our competitors. To put it in old-fashioned language, the country has been living beyond its means. It has been consuming too high a proportion of national income and investing too little in productive capacity. A short-term recovery in consumer confidence will be shallow and easily reversed. The household sector is burdened with unprecedented levels of personal indebtedness. The housing market is in crisis, with a massive slump in values since the peak of the boom in 1989. Currently about 1.3 million households owe more on their mortgages than their properties are worth on the market. With three million unemployed (about 11 percent of the labor force), public expenditures on social security have rocketed and tax receipts fallen. The state is currently borrowing about £50 billion a year to finance government expenditure, and by 1996 the level of public borrowing will approach about 8 percent of GDP. The country will then face a period in which a significant and rising portion of public revenue is mortgaged to service the debt. The only options are for taxes to rise and public services to be cut, both of which would have severe deflationary consequences. It appears virtually impossible, therefore, to reflate the economy by further deficit financing and impossible to reduce unemployment or address fundamental deficiencies in infrastructure by strategic public investment.

An over-long period of Conservative short-termism, promotion of easy credit, and tax cuts for the rich have left the government boxed in on macroeconomic policy. It dare not substantially reflate the economy, yet it cannot stand still, for continued recession will destroy its own finances. The only answer, if higher taxes are ruled out, is to cut welfare benefits and public-sector pay. This in itself is deflationary and imposes the burden of adjustment on the poorest. We are back to the 1930s again. Thatcher's economic miracle has turned out to be a catastrophe.

In these circumstances, the Labour party should be triumphant. It is certainly ahead in the polls, but it has no reason to be optimistic about its own capacity either to win the next election or to govern effectively if it did so. When asked which of the major parties has the greatest economic competence, more people respond with either "don't know" or "no party" than endorse the two of them together. There are strategies for economic recovery, but these involve costs for important interests closely connected with the major parties. Increasing direct taxes on higher income earners would raise revenue, but it

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would also reduce their disposable incomes so that they would have less to spend on imported goods. Income redistribution would have a similar effect to tariffs, since the poorest spend more of their income on UK products. Likewise, promoting the construction industry through public works and public housing would rapidly boost employment, because it is still a labor-intensive industry and mainly sourced by British products. However, such a stimulus and a wider stimulus to the private sector through job subsidies to employers would only be sustainable if the tendency of British wages to rise faster than either prices or productivity could be checked. Britain has a strong propensity to wage inflation that is being moderated only by the exceptional severity of the recession. This implies an incomes policy to allow an expansionary stimulus to be reflected in growing employment rather than in the increased wages of the employed. But higher income earners and the Conservatives reject higher direct taxes. The unions and Labour refuse to contemplate an incomes policy. Sustained recovery needs both, and without recovery the constraints on public expenditure cannot be overcome—growth means higher tax returns and lower social security payments.

Public frustration at economic failure is at an unprecedented level, but Britain's electoral system makes radical policies that hurt key minorities into dangerous vote losers. Britain's first-past-the-post electoral system means that the result is decided by marginal constituencies, of which there are only about 100 (out of 650), and by switch voters in those constituencies. A tiny part of the electorate decides the result. In April 1992 Labour lost because of its plans to raise taxes on higher and middle incomes, and the ruthless distortion of those plans by the Conservative-owned press. Since 1979 Britain has been governed by a party with a minority of the vote (43 percent) but a majority of parliamentary seats. Nearly 60 percent of the electorate has not voted for Tory rule. Yet it has taken fourteen years for the Labour party to get to the point of making a serious decision about proportional representation, and that decision is still in doubt.

Not only has Britain's economy suffered under the Conservatives, its political system has been damaged by a long period of arrogant and authoritarian government. In 1978 a senior Conservative, Lord Hailsham, called Britain's system of government an "elective dictatorship." He was pointing to such facts as the ability of the ruling party to make what laws it pleases without constitutional or judicial check if it has a majority in Parliament. Hailsham feared partisan left Labour rule. It was left to Thatcher finally to overthrow the unwritten conventions that tempered the government's powers and to make conviction politics and pure political will a basis for governing. Her successor and his cronies, like Kenneth Clarke, have made mulish stupidity a test of political virtue. Clarke as education and then health secretary has driven through unpopular policies on educational reorganization and National Health Service reform in the face of informed criticism and reasoned resistance.

Britain had an effective democracy when it had a working two-party system. The elected "dictators" feared they would be defeated by the opposition at the next election and moderated their policies accordingly. In order to function, Britain's system of Parliamentary government requires roughly evenly matched opposition. An unelectable opposition is thus a contradiction in terms. Labour has to face the fact that the Conservatives have ruled (either singly or in coalition) for fifty out of the last seventy-five years. The country now has to face the fact that it has to resort to widespread civil disobedience, as happened with the poll tax, or suborning a faction of rebellious Tory MPs in order to check government policies opposed by over 80 percent of the population, as with the mine closures.

Economic failure and elective "dictatorship" are not unconnected. The Conservatives have followed dogmatic, extreme, and unworkable policies both in macroeconomic management and the restructuring of the public sector. There was no effective means to check these policies because for a crucial period Labour was committing electoral suicide and was in danger of falling to the hard left. It took Neil Kinnock six years to reshape Labour as a party fit to survive.

Thatcher has wrecked local government, and her successor has continued the policy that has converted Britain into the most centralized state in the advanced industrial world. Whitehall and unelected quasi-governmental agencies have unprecedented and unaccountable power in fields as diverse as education and inner-city regeneration. Local councils have become centrally policed and funded service-delivery agencies without real fiscal or policy autonomy. Yet, by contrast, in the European Community regional government has emerged as a key source of economic regulation and support for industry. Hitherto centralized states such as France and Spain have made determined efforts to build up independent regional governments, and Germany has long been a federal state. Britain has lost competitive advantage because its public infrastructure is in such bad shape and because of the vir-

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tual absence of the regional and local provision of collective services to industry. The one authority that did not attempt major alternative economic policies, the Greater London Council, was abolished by Thatcher in 1986. A state in which an entire level of government can be abolished on a whim of the Prime Minister has no effective constitutional safeguards.

It used to be said that Britain had an unwritten Constitution. Now it seems clear that Britain has no Constitution at all. The Constitution is merely what politicians do and can persuade the public to accept. Britain has no domestic Bill of Rights. Judges are virtually powerless in the face of a specific statute or in regard to the exercise of the prerogative powers of the Crown. The result has been a succession of legislative measures and executive actions that undermine fundamental human rights. Thus, for example, Britain's labor laws are regarded as below accepted international standards by the UN's International Labor Organization. The freedoms of peaceful protest have been eroded by several pieces of legislation, most notably the Public Order Act of 1986. The Prevention of Terrorism Act is virtually useless against the Irish Republican Army, but permits the practice of internal exile, sending UK citizens back to Northern Ireland against their will. I could extend this list greatly, but one more example will emphasize Britain's lack of effective protections for rights. The UK has had more judgments against it in the European Court in cases brought by its own citizens under the European Convention on Human Rights than any other signatory state.

The defects of Britain's non-Constitution long predated Thatcher. The Constitution became a political issue under her and her lackluster successor because with them potentially authoritarian institutions have been exploited in an authoritarian style. Previously many Britons had been satisfied with the traditional windy rhetoric about the "oldest continuous system of parliamentary government" and the "Mother of Parliaments." The need for constitutional reforms has now become a central political issue. This has been the result of campaigning by the constitutional reform movement Charter 88, formed at the height of Thatcher's power, and other organizations. But it is also the result of economic failure, and the growing dissatisfaction of key sections of business and the thinking right with a form of government that fails to produce competence and continuity in policy.

Britain needs both major economic revitalization and a thoroughgoing political reform if it is to remain an advanced industrial country and not join a Fourth World of impoverished ex-industrial states. So far the party system has failed to deliver the means to accomplish this. The Conservatives have driven the country to the edge of ruin, yet Labour and the Liberal Democrats have been unable either effectively to oppose them in Parliament or to supplant them electorally. Both opposition parties need to do some major rethinking if Britain is to have a change of government. What may spur them to do so is that it is now obvious to the public as a whole that Conservative rule is a road to disaster. □

Anthony W. Pereira

PEACE IN THE THIRD WORLD?

THE CASE OF ANGOLA

Last September, while in Angola as an election observer, I met a young soldier in the Angolan army named Raul. Sporting green fatigues and an AK-47, he told me that he was on duty even though it was his birthday. He was one of four brothers, the only one not killed in a war that has gone on since 1975. He had planned to study engineering, he told me, but had been drafted at eighteen. Now, seven years older and about to face an uncertain future as a civilian, the young soldier had nothing to show for his service but a weapon and a uniform.

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Raul experienced the tragic diminution of life opportunities caused by the militarization of the third world. In much of Latin America, Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, chronic warfare means that merely staying alive is the best that millions can hope for. This reality was produced by the cold-war state system of the post–World War II period, in which each superpower had a high incentive to arm client states and rebel armies in return for political loyalty. In a vicious cycle of one-upmanship, threatened third world governments acquired more and more sophisticated weapons to confront increasingly well-armed rebels. By 1984, military spending in the third world reached $155 billion per year—only 17 percent of the world total, but still significant relative to spending on health, education, and welfare in those countries.

The cold-war system thus rested on a paradox: peace and stability in the developed countries were accompanied by scores of "hot" wars in the third world, fueled and at times created by the United States, the Soviet Union, and their allies. When the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991, the United States was no longer interested in arming governments and "freedom fighters" as a bulwark against a disappearing communist threat. Wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Mozambique began to wind down. In 1990, third world military spending, mirroring global military spending, dropped to $123 billion. It seemed that the developing countries might be facing an unprecedented opportunity for peaceful reconciliation, demilitarization, and national reconstruction.

The Case of Angola

The conflict in Angola is the result of divisions rooted in the recent colonial past. Portuguese colonialism offered few educational or economic opportunities to its African subjects relative to its more affluent French and British counterparts. Antagonistic ethnic identities reflected differential access to these opportunities.

When a nationalist movement of resistance to Portuguese colonialism began the armed struggle in 1961, it was fragmented along ethnic lines. The MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) emerged from the relatively well-educated and Europeanized mestiço and Mbundu community centered around the capital city of Luanda. Its ideology was communist and cosmopolitan. UNITA (Union for the Total Liberation of Angola) was largely a party of the Ovimbundu, a people clustered in the center-south of the country whose late resistance to colonialism and harsh experience as migrant laborers shaped the party's distinctive "ethno-populist" discourse. The National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), a force that declined in importance after the mid-1970s, was identified with the northern Bakongo people.

Portugal, supported by the United States and NATO, held off the nationalist challenge for ten years. But in 1974, after a revolution sparked by anti-imperialist army officers, it offered its colonies independence. An accord between the major Angolan movements broke down, resulting in a new war that quickly became internationalized. The MPLA, supported by the Soviet Union and Cuban troops that eventually numbered fifty thousand, held Luanda and most of the north, including the vital oil enclaves. UNITA, supported by South African troops and the United States, held large parts of the south.

By 1980, Angola became a test case of the "Reagan doctrine," in which the United States pledged to roll back communist governments around the world. Aid to UNITA was increased, and large conventional battles were fought. During this period, the Angolan government was spending about 20 percent of its GNP on the war, making it one of the most militarized states in the world. Thousands of young men were conscripted on both sides, and hundreds of thousands of rural dwellers fled to the shelter of cities, especially Luanda.

A war this thoroughly internationalized—the term "civil war" is a misnomer—could be ended only through international negotiation. Such negotiation began in the late 1980s, as the cold war ground to an end. In a deal struck in 1988, the South Africans agreed to withdraw from Namibia in return for a Cuban troop withdrawal. In 1991, the two main Angolan forces agreed to a cease-fire after sixteen years of war, an estimated five hundred thousand dead, and incalculable economic losses. They also agreed to participate in a multiparty election in September 1992.

The 1992 Election and its Aftermath

The elections, although staged in a way that gave considerable advantages to the ruling MPLA, were described as properly conducted by all observer groups. They gave the Angolan people an unprecedented opportunity to participate in politics, an opportunity that most seized eagerly. Ninety percent of them registered for the election, and 92 percent of

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those endured long lines and difficult conditions to vote. When the results were tallied, the MPLA had won 54 percent of the national assembly seats, to UNITA's 34 percent. In the presidential race, the MPLA's candidate, José Eduardo dos Santos, won 49.6 percent of the vote compared to 40.1 percent for the UNITA candidate, Jonas Savimbi, requiring a second-round runoff election. The results seem to show a country divided between Savimbi's primarily rural and Ovimbundu supporters in the central highlands and the rest of the country, which was willing to accept the MPLA. Other parties and candidates received very few votes.

However, the elections were conducted under conditions of dual sovereignty, because the two armies were never demobilized as planned. Owing in part to U.S. lobbying, the UN's peacekeeping force in charge of demobilization was too small—476 military and police observers in a country of about ten million—to do anything to prevent a return to war. At the end of October, two weeks after the release of the election results, UNITA launched an attack on the capital city of Luanda. Belying the democratic image that had been built up for it in Washington, UNITA lobbed indiscriminate mortar attacks on residential areas of the city. The result was a violent backlash by MPLA supporters that drove UNITA from Luanda; two of Savimbi's top leaders, and hundreds, perhaps thousands, of his suspected supporters were killed. The war started again with full force.

UNITA's resumption of the war, probably with South African support, caught the MPLA government in a weak position. UNITA, with more experienced and loyal troops, quickly gained control of three-fourths of the national territory. In the country's fiercest battle, the MPLA's attempt to dislodge UNITA from Huambo was repulsed after fifty-six days of brutal fighting, when the surviving MPLA troops withdrew on March 8. An estimated twelve thousand people were killed and another fifteen thousand wounded in the battle; among the dead was the entire family of Marcelino Moco, an Ovimbundu who was made prime minister of the National Assembly by the MPLA in a vain gesture toward national reconciliation.

The fighting in early 1993 was more intense than anything seen in the post-independence period. Thousands of refugees fled from towns, and over a million people face the prospect of starvation. The country is approaching the level of disintegration of Somalia. (See Aristide Zolberg, "The Specter of Anarchy" in *Dissent*, Summer 1992). The MPLA government reintroduced national conscription in early March. The soldier Raul, whom I met in Luanda, is probably still in the army, no closer to an engineering degree than before.

What Could Be Done?

Mainstream opinion in the West (reflected in the editorial pages of such publications as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Economist*) now favored the United States's diplomatic recognition of Angola's MPLA government, which occurred on May 20, 1993. This is a case of too little, too late. The United States, which through its multimillion-dollar support of UNITA shares a large measure of responsibility for the recent fighting, has done next to nothing to keep the peace. This should hardly be surprising—in Nicaragua, for example, the United States also generously funded war, but has been stingy with money for peaceful reconstruction. The UN, for its part, seems to have decided not to invest more personnel and resources in Angola; it issued a toothless condemnation of UNITA in March and retired to the sidelines. The implication of these facts is that the Angolan peace will have to be achieved mainly by Angolans, if it is to be achieved at all.

Peace talks between the MPLA and UNITA sputtered and stalled in Addis Ababa and then Abidjan in early 1993. Both sides seemed to accept that an outright military victory was impossible but were unable to trust one another sufficiently to create the government of national unity that is needed to end the war. UNITA's preferred formula for peace seems to be some sort of federalism, which would allow it to administer its central highlands stronghold on its own terms.

But federalism, frequently touted as a solution to conflicts in Africa, has limitations—Yugoslavia was, after all, a federal republic. A more workable formula for Angolan peace is probably a pact that splits control of the central state between the two parties. Such a pact was successful in Colombia in 1958, after years of bloody conflict between the Liberal and Conservative parties. In this agreement, the presidency of the country alternated between the two parties, all non–civil service jobs within the state were equally divided between them, and most measures in Congress (in which only the Liberals and Conservatives could hold seats) required a two-thirds majority to pass. This pact, highly unsatisfactory in democratic terms because of its exclusionary nature, nevertheless kept the peace in Colombia and was later opened up to other parties. Unfortunately, its success was due in large part to an

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institution Angola currently lacks—an army without partisan affiliations. Envisioned in the 1991 accords, no such army was created—the greatest failure of the 1992 peace process.

On the other hand, the resumption of the war in Angola reveals the durability of the idea of Angolan nationhood. Neither side has contemplated a separatist solution. Each side claims to be "patriotic" and to have the right to lead the nation, but each has a very different conception of "*Angolanidade*," or Angolanness. As in many other processes of nation-building, national consolidation does not seem possible without bloody war. Paradoxically, because on each side the concept of nationhood has endured, the nation as a functioning entity has virtually ceased to exist.

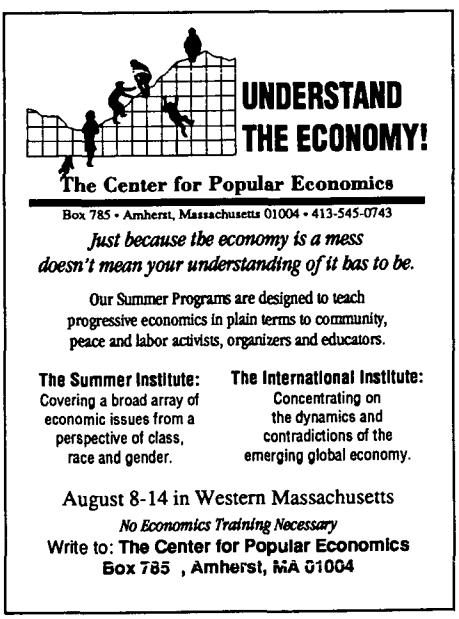
Abandonment of the Third World?

The proposition that the post–cold war era presents third world states with an unprecedented opportunity for peace and national reconstruction seems valid in the long run. But the case of Angola shows that short-term prospects are less pleasant. History, as Salman Rushdie has written, does not erase itself. The legacies of cold war conflicts die hard, and armed forces, once set in motion, cannot be stopped overnight. Despite large-scale popular enthusiasm for a peaceful, electoral resolution of conflict, Angola returned to full-scale war and economic chaos in January.

For Angola and other third world countries, the chief danger in the new international system is the opposite of what it was in the old: not militaristic intervention, but neglect by the West. In terms of consumer demand, the global economy that really matters now consists of about 750 million people who earn $10,000 a year or more. Few people in developing countries are included in this economy; their countries serve instead simply as providers of natural resources and primary goods.

Despite years of war in Angola, the West has been getting what it wants out of Angola, principally oil, by means of an enclave sector. There is no incentive for its governments to invest in peacekeeping as long as the oil keeps flowing. When the enclave is threatened, as it was in the recent fighting, the oil companies can simply shut down operations and concentrate on other fields. Angola thus faces the limitations of a purely extractive economy. The vast interior of the country—which furnished the Americas with four million slaves prior to the mid-1800s—cannot benefit from oil wealth as long as the war continues.

The somber conclusion to be drawn from this case is that opportunities are not guarantees. The real chances for third world peace and nation-building in the new international system may be as slim as those for economic development. Only a few countries will be able to enlist the aid of the international community in ending war, as only a few have been able to use the global trade regime to join the select club of "newly-industrialized countries." □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David Glenn

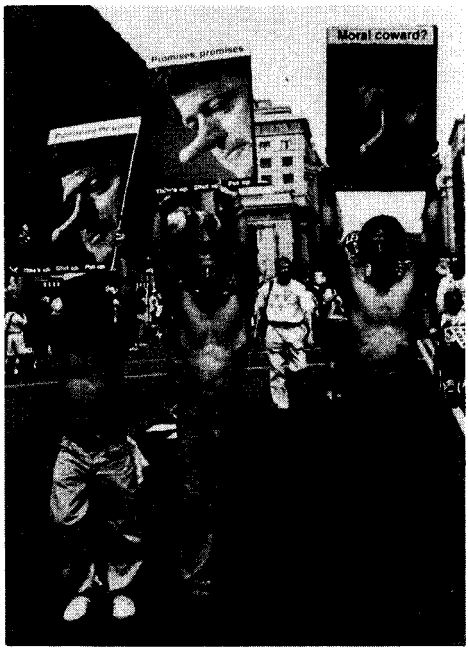
LESBIAN AND GAY MARCH

Recent mass marches on Washington, no matter how noble or well-attended, have generally been dispiriting affairs. On various days in the past six years liberals and leftists have gathered on the Mall by the tens of thousands in support of labor unions, abortion rights, and low-income housing—only to wake up the next morning to discover that the news coverage of the march had been slight, and that hardly a dent had been made in congressional agendas or in the political zeitgeist.

The April 25 lesbian and gay civil rights march dramatically escaped this fate. The march, whose date had been set over three years ago, turned out to be extraordinarily timely, perfectly positioned to catch the crest of national attention surrounding the military's ban on lesbian and gay soldiers. Cable news channels carried extensive live coverage of the march and rally; the major national newspapers gave it prominent notice; and, of course, MTV was there. The week after the march, *New York* magazine ran a cover story on "Lesbian Chic."

All of this media attention, both the serious and the shallow, was palpable at the march itself—there was much more of a sense of history-in-the-making than at any other march in recent memory. But not much of the media coverage captured the complexity of the mood in Washington. On one hand, there was elation at the sense of possibility presented by the end of the Reagan-Bush era; on the other hand, a sense of bitterness and fear at the strength of recent public hostility to President Clinton's plan to lift the military ban. More broadly, the festive, carnival mood of the march competed with the sadness of reminders of the ongoing scourge of AIDS. One large contingent of men from a gay/bisexual anarchist organization called Radical Faeries whooped and ran the length of the march, most of them wearing only loincloths; a few hundred yards behind them, the contingent from the lesbian-and-gay-based Metropolitan Community Church sang "Amazing Grace."

Earlier this year I lived with a German student



Linda Eber/IMPACT VISUALS

of American intellectual history, who was making only his second visit to the United States. He was stupefied by the amount of attention the gays-in-the-military issue was receiving. "Of course gay rights are important," he would say. "But why is *this* issue so big? Why are there no marches on behalf of the homeless or the unemployed?" And he would proceed to give me familiar lectures about the legacies of Puritanism and familiar half-truths about how the United States is dangerously individualistic and insufficiently egalitarian.

These harangues were, I think, genuinely untainted by homophobic bigotry, but they still disturbed me—they contradict my entire experience and understanding of the left. Certainly there are tensions between feminism and gay liberation and movements for social justice, but on the deepest level egalitarianism and sexual freedom are allied. If our culture can't envision new ways of expressing sexuality or of structuring family life, it will be that much less likely to envision new, more just economic arrangements. If my housemate had joined me at April's march on Washington, and had witnessed firsthand the kinds of political solidarity engendered by sexual dissidence, I hoped he would have seen my point. □

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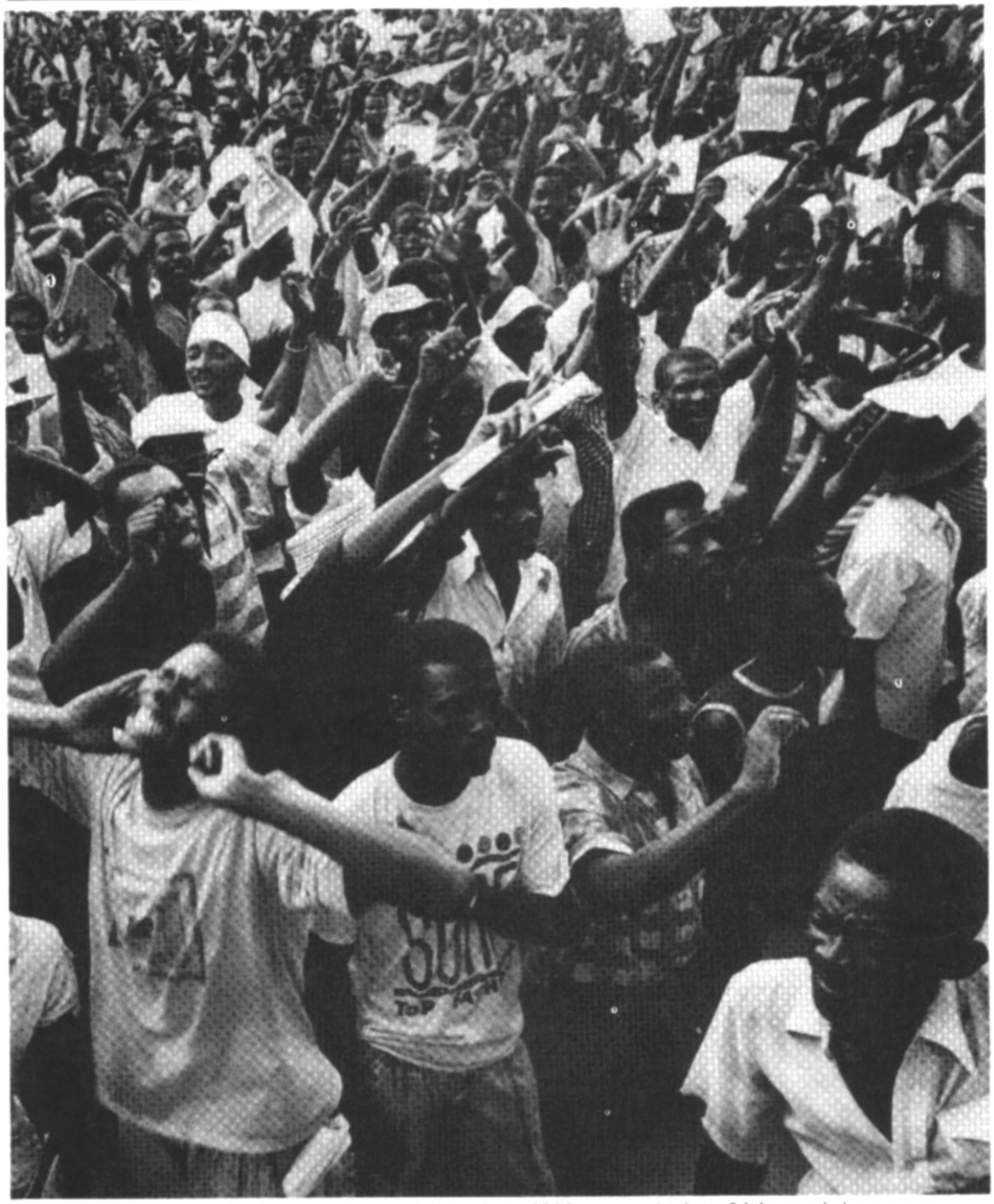

A crowd chants at a rally for Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1990. Andrew Lichtenstein/IMPACT VISUALS

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George Packer

CHOKE HOLD ON HAITI

A First-Hand Report

After dark in Port-au-Prince the only people on the streets are the desperate, the vicious, and those with private cars. As my Haitian friend drove through the city center, he gave me a tour guide's narration of the night sights. "See those boys standing there, with the shaved heads? Street kids. If you want someone killed they'll do it for two dollars, a dollar. That sidestreet—closed off, too much garbage. More garbage over there. This area on the left, by the water—no one goes there at night, it's absolutely certain you'll be killed."

The reek of the port entered through our open windows and then gave way, as we sped along the deserted boulevard, to a closer human stink. "This wall we're driving along, on the other side: La Saline. A couple hundred thousand people in there."

Except for scattered kerosene lamps, the slum was pitch black. "I have contacts there, I work with some popular organizations, but I don't go there. Not dressed as I am. In a straw hat and dirty trousers, maybe."

By daylight Port-au-Prince, after a year and a half of military brutality and foreign embargo, was the dirtiest city I'd ever seen. In the middle of downtown market streets, rotting papaya and orange rinds and scraps of paper and sludge accumulated into mounds as high as your head that blocked traffic to cars and all but the bravest pedestrians. Throughout the city's hills and flats a gray liquid ran underfoot, and after nearly slipping to the ground several times I realized that it wasn't water but sewage. Garbage workers hadn't been paid in months, but Port-au-Prince's filth reflected more than a fiscal crisis or ordinary municipal neglect. A man in Cité Soleil, one of the city's worst slums (or "*bidonvilles*"), told me that people were allowing the garbage to pile up and the canals to fill with slime as a gesture of protest, of refusal. A perverse one, since it fouled their own lives and worsened the atmosphere of degradation. The line between resistance and despair wasn't always easy to draw in Haiti.

"But on the day of Aristide's inauguration," said my Haitian friend, remembering February 7, 1991, "you could drop your bread on the ground and pick it up and eat it. The city was beautiful." Boys in Cité Soleil told me that on the day Aristide returns to Haiti, Port-au-Prince will be spotless.

The clean and the dirty, guns and salvation: in Haiti, once you cut through the tangle of Byzantine conspiracies and deals and rumors that have always constituted its official politics, things can be exhaustingly simple. On the one hand, a military regime, supported by a rich elite, that has killed as many as three thousand people since the September 30, 1991 coup, that battens on drug and contraband money—a regime that is only the latest in Haiti's long tradition of tyranny backed up by money and guns. On the other hand, a high-strung priest chosen by 67 percent of the people as Haiti's first freely and fairly elected president. Haiti undermines your inclination toward nuance; it tempts you into Manichean thoughts.

Outside the National Palace, a three-domed vision in white where Aristide was inaugurated before ecstatic crowds and where the generals are now holed up behind their tanks, a beggar woman in rags fans her charcoal stove by the iron gate—black on white, misery framed

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against wedding-cake purity. I leave my camera in the bag.

In Cité Soleil, a group of boys poses for me under a mural of President Aristide. The wall is bullet-pocked, and the boys are part of a continual guard that protects the mural from military attack. As I look through the viewfinder I see that they have assumed the posture of devotees: kneeling, looking back and up toward the wall, mouths open in awe, arms out in adoration.

These are the kinds of picture that Haiti too easily induces—perhaps true pictures of the place, perhaps even the essential truth, but not the only one. Though Aristide's restoration, if or when it happens, will be a deliverance for Haiti's vast population of increasingly militant, increasingly desperate poor people, it won't end the country's democratic struggle. It will only make it possible for that struggle to begin again. In Haiti's Manichean terms, Aristide's return would represent the triumph of good over evil, but it's just those terms Haiti has got to escape if a democratic culture is to have any chance of taking root.

Franchise Terrorism

"Physically, Haiti is a country that's in the process of disappearing," a trade unionist in exile told me. Such a country, he argued, couldn't afford *not* to begin the long-term process of creating the institutions of a democracy. But when you see Haiti for the first time its decay is so overpowering that you begin to think exactly the opposite: that to talk of such things is a luxury, maybe an irrelevance. You can't think beyond what's staring you in the face.

It begins on the airplane from Miami: barely at cruising altitude, before the flight attendant has returned all the passports she collected in order to fill out the arrival cards of the illiterate passengers, before you've had time to take in the calm emerald Caribbean and then remember that it's a graveyard for thousands of Haitians, you're already descending over a piece of land that looks like the mountains of Utah. Then the humidity hits you as a sensation of something unnaturally wrong: the island is tropical, it ought to be covered with trees; it once was. But the pressures of population and poverty and policy have turned the one-third of Hispaniola that Haiti occupies into a desert. The Dominican border is a dividing line between green and brown. The water along the Haitian coast has turned beige with silt from the eroding rains. On the ground, the land looks worse. Along the road north from Port-au-Prince the bald hills are lunar; little towns appear like oases, patches of rice fields and trees, tributes to the peasants' tenacity and to the scale of Haiti's deforestation.

Other things are disappearing besides trees and topsoil. Since the coup, the military regime has set out to destroy the unions, the media, the more politically active schools and universities, the peasant groups, and the neighborhood organizations that make up the fragile shoots of a civil society in post-Duvalier Haiti. "It has been indiscriminate," one opposition figure told me, "even the groups that didn't support Aristide." Although most of the killing took place in the immediate aftermath of Aristide's overthrow, it has continued at a flow heavy and steady enough to induce widespread terror. The week I arrived in March six bodies turned up, including those of two Baptist clergymen and a young activist from one of the left-wing political parties. At night it was common to hear bursts of gunfire from the poor neighborhood near my hotel.

The mechanism of fear seems neither carefully controlled nor entirely random. "Franchise terrorism" is how a human rights expert put it: a system, mafia- or gang-like, of relations between higher-ranking officers and the lower ranks, extending into a civilian population of *attachés*, a term that broadly includes what's left of the Duvalierist Tontons Macoutes. According to a trade union leader, absolute loyalty and a cut of the profits are the price a junior officer pays to his superiors in exchange for control over a slice of urban or rural territory. Within his area, the officer runs a gang of criminals that might include twelve- and thirteen-year-old recruits. So the distinction between political and common crime isn't easy to make, and most Haitians don't try. The Creole word *zenglendo* describes anyone with a

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gun, and it is used interchangeably with Macoute and *attaché*. To be a killer is to be on the side of the military regime. During a forty-five minute conversation one evening a Haitian leftist pointed out four *attachés* who passed his open door on the street. "That one there has a gun in his backpack. That one in the red cap pretending to study under the streetlight is another. The bearded cigarette seller by your hotel drive—he's an *attaché* too." *Attachés* looked like neighborhood men, students.

In other words, they come from "the people," who in Aristide's imagery make up "Lavalas," a unified and mighty flood "that would sweep away all the dross, all the after-effects of a shameful past." (Aristide's supporters are called Lavalassians.) But in desperate times some poor people are corruptible for a few dollars.

The sense that anyone could be an *attaché* shadows and poisons the most innocuous encounters. When a Haitian man and a Canadian woman agreed to give me a ride from up the coast back into Port-au-Prince, the man automatically took out his identity card to show my host that he was trustworthy. The point was the openness of the gesture itself. But the assumed ubiquity of killers in and out of uniform means that the risk comes from free-lance as much as officially sanctioned violence. All of the trade unionists, political figures, and local activists I spoke to were still, a year and a half after the coup, restricted in their movements to home and work, going out only in the daytime, seldom traveling through the city, let alone the countryside. Most had spent the first nine months under the regime confined to their houses or in hiding. "You say the city has become very dirty," one told me. "I know it theoretically—I haven't seen it." A few kept guns at home. The precautions would be totally inadequate in the case of a concerted military effort to assassinate. Jean-Claude Bajeux, a leader of the center-left KONAKOM party, told me that when threats come he can place a call to General Cedras, the de facto ruler, "who respects me as a moderate and will call them off." But Bajeux still can't leave the capital to meet provincial members without fear of an attack by some local officer or section chief. The morning I spoke to him, his party's general secretary, Victor Benoit, was stranded up in Gonaïves, a provincial hotspot, with a broken-down rental car. Bajeux was on the phone explaining the urgency of the situation to someone at the rental agency and insisting another car be sent up to Gonaïves to fetch the general secretary.

Repression follows certain patterns in Haiti, though it takes a while to understand them. At the French Institute of Haiti I attended a performance of a melodrama by the West Indian playwright Aimé Cesaire. Before the opening curtain, a Frenchman came onstage to explain the connection between Cesaire's anticolonial polemics and the struggle for freedom going on outside the room where we were sitting. The audience of well-dressed light- and dark-skinned Haitians burst into fervent applause. Apparently *attachés* weren't regular theatergoers. At a commemoration in a Senate chamber of the sixth anniversary of Haiti's democratic constitution—one of the most violated in the world—opposition parliamentarians observed a moment of silence for the Haitians who died for freedom, and then took turns denouncing the constitutional abuses of the military regime. One politician spoke of the four hundred thousand Haitians forced into clandestinity and the hundred thousand who've become *zenglendos*. I looked around the chamber, wondering why these citizens and leaders felt free enough from *zenglendos* to make public speeches against them.

But out on the streets, boys hawking copies of a new pro-Aristide Creole newspaper called *Libetè* have been beaten up by thugs. Yet the extreme leftist French-language paper *Haiti Progrès* sells openly and without trouble. An activist can carry around a tape recording that explains the Constitution in popular terms, but he can't play it for others without taking strong precautions. Print journalists haven't been harassed or killed in nearly the numbers radio journalists have. Literacy and education partly explain this pattern: if *Libetè* were written in French, its publisher told me, it couldn't be understood by poor Haitians who know the

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alphabet from church hymnals but not the language of higher education, nor could it be read aloud to groups of the illiterate.

A regime that lets senators make speeches in chamber during the day and shoots young activists in the *bidonvilles* at night is operating on two assumptions: that the world cares more about the former than the latter, and that the latter are more of a threat. When Haitian businessmen and professionals explain why they supported the coup in spite of their hatred of military regimes, they begin by arguing that Aristide was the second coming of Papa Doc; soon the vision darkens into a generalized horror of "the people" in whose name Aristide speaks. In these scenarios, the Haitian poor become a mindless appetitive mob, hell-bent on confiscation and revenge. With such a population, discipline and order are unpleasant but necessary things.

"And look at what their order is," said Schiller Marcelin, a trade unionist languishing in exile in Miami. "They kill, they rape. Drugs, contraband. That's their order."

Corruption and Degradation

La magouille—corruption, in the broadest sense—is as central a theme in Haitian life as class in England or rags-to-riches in the United States. It hovers around lives and reputations like a leering, scabby, sticky-fingered creature out of Virgilian personification—or, impersonally, like the sewage that threatens to bring you down all over the capital. A political opponent automatically becomes a *magouillard*, and since objective truth is as elusive as it is undervalued in Port-au-Prince, the suspicion will stick. *Magouille* can mean an ordinary bribe, a deal between one politician and another, or a selling out in the smallest or largest way. A year and a half of embargo has made *magouille* a terrible temptation for some Haitians, and a year and a half of military rule has made the moral price for succumbing terrible as well.

"It's impossible that we should be what we are, impossible," said Gérard Dalvius, an ex-major in the Haitian army, a lawyer, and secretary of state for justice during Aristide's brief presidency. His career has exposed him to several types of corruption, and as we spoke in his dim, windowless, air-conditioned office on a decaying downtown street he smiled a wild-eyed smile that seemed at once to ward off and express his despair. In the armed forces, he told me, the corruption is general, almost universal. "They may start out as idealists, with a patriotic notion of service, but then they have children, they have responsibilities, there are great temptations, they could make tens of thousands of dollars. Only a few can resist."

In 1987 Major Dalvius published a book called *An Army for Democracy in Haiti*. He was summoned before a superior and asked why he had written it. "I told him that I did it for the money, because I didn't want to speak of the politics. 'Why didn't you tell me?' this colonel said. 'I could cut you in on some things.' " Dalvius was discharged from the army. He became a lawyer and soon grew used to the sight of state prosecutors passing envelopes to judges at the tribunal. "Even today, with my practice, I could make millions if I wanted. But how many Gérard Dalviuses are there in Haiti?" Until a deep change in mentality takes place, Dalvius said, a sense of honest work and national purpose, "We don't deserve the attention of the international community. America has every right to do what it thinks is in its interest, as long as Haiti is in this state of degradation. I no longer understand Haitians, I don't know them."

The corruption of the army and the state have reached a grotesque extreme. A rural health care worker from the provincial town of Dessalines described the malnutrition and tuberculosis that have resulted from a black market trade in the few medicines that pass through the embargo and wind up in the hands of Haiti's rulers. In the slums, small nutrition and development projects have ground to a halt now that foreign money passes through the coup regime. There are widespread reports that the handful of elite families who live in the steep breezy hills above sweltering Port-au-Prince have been building private generators, wharves, airstrips to circumvent the embargo and profit from contraband. Parts of those

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hillsides are under feverish construction, while the city below grows fouler and fouler. A country where the rich pay little in taxes, the state functions as their milk cow, government services are nearly nonexistent, and only money and connections can guarantee access to basic medical care: Haiti today is like the dream of the Reagan era fully realized.

The great irony of the embargo is that well-off Haitians are the ones who complain most bitterly about it. Some of them have reason to: I met businessmen in Miami who had left Haiti rather than do what it would take to make it in these circumstances. But the poor Haitians who cannot afford, cannot even survive the tripling of prices told me that if the embargo means Aristide's return, they will continue to support it. "The people would suffer ten times this much," said the rural health worker, "if they could have him back." So the choke hold on their lives has become the only symbol left of their hopes.

Corruption is not only a problem in the army high command and among the fantastically wealthy families. It tempts all kinds of ordinary Haitians with all kinds of *magouille*. Artists whose paintings, according to a gallery owner named Mireille Jerome, have become a favorite investment for wealthy Haitians because of the weak currency are now producing work with an eye toward its Miami resale value. The effects of corruption, Jerome said, are "unforeseen and unforeseeable." "Those who never stole before," a driver told me, "steal now. Ten-, fourteen-year-olds become *attachés* for money."

And then there is the ubiquitous political *magouille*, of which a new example seems to pop up every week. Take the case of Pierre Manicy, leader of one faction of the Autonomous Central of Haitian Workers, the furthest level of Haiti's labor groups and the closest to Aristide. After years in the struggle against Duvalierism, after launching the most militant strikes of the post-Duvalier era, after bringing mass action to challenge the Aristide regime to purge the civil service of old Duvalierist functionaries and make way for union members, Manicy recently took a job in the Information Ministry of Prime Minister Marc Bazin, the coup regime's front man. People in the union movement say he had severe money problems. "You have to remember," one union leader told me, "these are men in this struggle, not machines, men with feelings, hearts, families. It is a real tragedy." A tragedy because Manicy, with this move, is forever lost to the democratic movement. From now on he will be known as a traitor.

Or take the case of PANPRA, the Nationalist and Progressive Revolutionary party of Haiti, an affiliate of the Socialist International and an important part of Haiti's moderate, organized left. During the 1990 elections that brought Aristide to power, PANPRA threw its support behind Bazin, the "American" candidate, who was the early favorite before Aristide's surprise candidacy. PANPRA's leaders no doubt saw Bazin as a responsible centrist who offered access to power, with the honorable notion of influencing his policies from the left. After Aristide's victory, PANPRA made overtures to the priest-president, but the party was rebuffed and maintained its alliance with Bazin. After the coup and Bazin's assumption of the prime minister's post, it found itself a junior partner in the military government. The arguments of PANPRA leaders—that negotiation is the only solution, that one can influence the regime from within as well as without—are the arguments of reasonable people, but the tortuous locutions of their public statements betray an aversion to articulating the brutal truth that Haiti's democratic socialist party is in bed with fascists. When I asked a pro-Aristide French priest what made people like the leaders of PANPRA join the other side, he wasted no words over the ambiguities of compromise but simply rubbed his fingers together in the international gesture for money. "And they are finished. Forever."

Jean-Claude Bajeux, a leader of KONAKOM, Haiti's other moderate socialist party, which has remained steadfastly opposed to the coup, explained the danger that *magouille politique* poses to democratization. "The people in Haiti have always felt betrayed by politicians. So there is a problem with

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transmitting their power to parties and leaders. The coup was the ultimate betrayal. And PANPRA showed that the people were right." In other words, where politics is so often such a dirty business, political organization itself falls into disrepute. The deep suspicion of politics is sometimes called *marronage*, the mentality of the runaway slaves who overthrew Haiti's colonial French masters. Between *marronage* and *magouille* there is an unbreachable divide. Every compromise becomes a betrayal. As a result, all hope for change rides on a single man, a man who says he isn't a politician at all but a servant of the people. And the people have put their complete trust in him alone.

Aristide and Democracy

In the aftermath of the coup a propaganda war broke out over the nature of the Aristide government. Its opponents in Haiti, as well as in the Bush administration, began to impugn Aristide's record on human rights. For a great many Haitians the accusations alone were proof of the Bush administration's complicity; others, including trade unionists I spoke with whose credibility is very high, told of the American embassy personnel who tried to prepare them psychologically in advance of the coup.

But in Haiti reasonable belief is easily undermined by *zin*, rumor, tales. A Haitian businessman insisted to me that the first soldiers to enter the National Palace after Aristide's flight discovered the decapitated heads of his political enemies arranged in a circle around his bed. The lurid charges, and even the more substantive debate over Aristide's encouragement of mob violence and lynching, have obscured the very serious question of his role in the quest for Haitian democracy, his status as a democratic figure.

Among the Lavalassians, both here and in Haiti, when you ask about Aristide's mistakes you are told that everyone makes mistakes, and that mistakes are no reason to overthrow a government—as if your question were intended to justify the coup. The answer cuts off the discussion. "Criticize," said Roody Edmé, treasurer of the National Confederation of Haitian Teachers, "and they say: 'You don't like me?' "

"Tolerance," said André Joseph, the union's spokesman exiled in Boston, "is not our strength."

Aristide's exile from power, and the total repression of democratic activity within Haiti, have only reinforced his mythic stature. At a meeting of hundreds of supporters in a church basement in Boston, at another in a storefront office in Miami's Little Haiti, the sense of a personal connection to the president they affectionately call "Titid," the sense of love, was palpable. In both cases the crowd was waiting for scheduled speakers to arrive; in both cases the speakers were late. In the meantime, little activity took place—nothing that could be called organizing work. The people watched pro-Aristide videotapes. The license numbers of illegally parked cars were read out. And it began to seem that this was simply a version of the waiting for Aristide that Haitians at home and abroad have been doing since September 30, 1991.

Like the pose of the boys under the mural in Cité Soleil, the attitude toward the waiting grows more messianic as the ordeal is drawn out. Aristide's relation to Lavalas, his political movement, seems the natural extension of his own life work as priest, as shepherd to the flock. In his recent autobiography, post-Duvalier Haiti becomes a morality tale in which almost the only proper names mentioned are his and the various generals, corrupt politicians, and Macoutes ranged against him. Between Aristide and "the people," the whole array of emerging democratic organizations and leaders—the trade unionists, the political figures like Victor Benoit of KONAKOM and Evans Paul, the elected mayor of Port-au-Prince and spokesman of the National Front for Change and Democracy (FNCD) that sponsored Aristide's candidacy—have all but disappeared. One result is that no reader of the *New York Times* or *Miami Herald* has even heard of Evans Paul or the FNCD. The drama is a love affair of one man and the mass.

André Joseph, the exiled spokesman of the teachers union, described for me a conversation he had with Aristide during the 1990 campaign.

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"I discussed the relation between the executive branch and the various elements and organizations of civil society. He seemed to agree that it was important. Two days later, I interviewed him for the union and asked, 'What supports are you going to use in order to govern?' He answered, 'The people.' It had all gone in one ear and out the other."

"In his acts, Aristide seems to believe in direct democracy," said Roody Edmé of the teachers union when I met him and the union's general secretary, Carl-Henri Guiteau, at Guiteau's house in a middle-class neighborhood of Port-au-Prince. "And we are persuaded of one thing. The return of the president doesn't mean the return of democratic structures."

"We don't have democratic cultural references or traditions," Guiteau explained. "There isn't a dynamic of discussion. If I disagree, one wants to eliminate me. Even in a salary negotiation, to ask for five hundred and accept four hundred is considered a betrayal. It's a problem of education—it's not something that can be done in one or two years. Around the time of the election there was a will for change without a political apparatus—so Aristide becomes understandable. Everything crystallized in him. And his errors came out of the dynamic by which Lavalas reached power. We're now paying the consequences."

"The coup would have happened," Edmé said, "whatever Aristide did. It was a coup by a class that was being destroyed."

"But with his return we have to get past the old slogans," Guiteau said, "the anarchic demands, to be more scientific, strategic. . . ."

"And not to frighten the middle class," Edmé concluded. "Aristide felt total suspicion for them, for intellectuals. The people from the *bidonvilles, les misérables*—they were the only true ones."

"He is autocratic, stubborn, proud, a real petit bourgeois," I was told by a Haitian leftist close to Evans Paul, who had passed a document he co-authored on Haiti's political and economic future to President Aristide and never received a reply. "His unwillingness to consult, his sense of being the people's emissary, his failure to build institutions—it has all blocked democratic growth. And yet he has created some real openings for democracy that no one else could create. That's the paradox, and that's why I say *Aristide, malgré tout*. Aristide, in spite of everything."

"Everything" has some very specific referents, and they come up again and again in conversations with Haitian democrats who find themselves in critical support of the priest-president. There was his appointment of an incompetent associate as prime minister, his creation of a cabinet of trusted intimates, his total exclusion of his electoral allies in the FNCD. There was his failure to bring representatives from the various sectors of civil society into government jobs, his failure to change the traditional notion of bureaucracy as a milk cow. There was his open disregard for the legislature, along with his willingness to tolerate a mass march of supporters on the parliament on August 12, 1991, when legislators, including some from the FNCD, were contemplating a no-confidence vote on the prime minister's government—a march that was meant to intimidate and succeeded. There was the burning by Lavalassian mobs the next day of Evans Paul's political headquarters and of the offices of a trade union that had launched a mass action against Aristide's failure to purge the civil service of Macoutes.

"And if the coup had failed," said a high FNCD official, "within a month the FNCD would have been destroyed by the Lavalassians." Immediately after the coup, partisans of Aristide spread the rumor that Evans Paul and the FNCD had engineered it. To this day, among factions in Haiti and especially in the United States, and in the pages of the leftist paper *Haiti Progrès*, the insinuations continue, despite the unwavering denunciations of the coup from day one by leaders like Evans Paul, despite the physical blows they've taken, despite the risks they continue to run.

When I was in the Cité Soleil slum, I asked young people living there what they thought of Evans Paul, who was elected their mayor overwhelmingly at the same time Aristide became their president. Some answered that his name was known to them but that was all.

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Others, neighborhood organizers who spoke in angry, categorical terms, said that he was just another politician out for himself, that he meant nothing to the people of Cité Soleil.

"But you have to interpret what they told you," said the Lavalassian French priest. "They know Evans Paul as one of the three martyrs of All Soul's Day." The priest was referring to the torture several democratic leaders suffered in 1989 at the hands of the dictator Prosper Avril's forces. "But they also know that he said some critical things about Aristide, which makes them unsure about him. The people never commit themselves to organizations." And as the head of an organization—the FNCD—that had very public disputes with Aristide during his presidency, even a martyr can become suspect.

The insularity and intolerance of Lavalas are not only expressions of *marronage*, the justifiable wariness of the poor. Lavalas has inherited the mental habits of Haiti's left, formed during the dark days of the Duvaliers, surviving in small underground groups, given to sectarianism and dogma and sloganeering. In some ways the mentality of *groupuscules* persists to this day, and the conditions of the coup have entrenched it—whatever openness of debate and critical questioning began to take place while Aristide was president have shut off.

Between the increasingly radical *organizations populaires* that have received the brunt of military repression in Haiti's slums and provinces and the institutional middle-class left of intellectuals, politicians, and trade unionists, there is a wary alliance in the face of a common enemy that will probably dissolve as soon as that enemy loosens its grip. The general secretary of the teachers union has contacts with groups in Carrefour Feuilles, the sprawling slum down the hill from his house, but he cannot go there himself—not only for fear of *attachés* and other criminals, but because his status as "bourgeois," as "reformist," makes him unwelcome. The Haitian leftist close to Evans Paul, who calls himself revolutionary and not reformist, has run into the same barriers--revolutionary or not, he is middle class.

"Port-au-Prince is a small city," said Roody Edmé. "It's very near, but also very far."

One Sunday I went to a private beach with a group of Haitian professionals—a teacher, an artist, a gallery owner, a chemist. They were all of them politically aware, activist, and for one or two this drive up the coast from Port-au-Prince was their first view of the countryside since the coup. As I paddled in the limpid water and watched the beachgoers drink and play Ping-Pong under palm trees that hid the ravaged hills, the teacher swimming near me said, "It seems like another country, doesn't it?"

I asked him how many of the well-off people on the beach could be considered sympathizers of democracy.

"Very few," he answered, "very few. They sense the precariousness of their position, so they try to get it while they can. Very little of the money is earned honestly. Professional salaries can't be their only source of income. The luxury cars are contraband. And Aristide is seen as a threat—even I am. It's my own neighbors who might hire someone to get rid of me."

The middle-class Haitians who have staked their claim with democratic change are as isolated circumstantially from the poor as they are mentally from the ruling elite. Their position is tenuous, shot through with contradiction and temptation; in the extreme polarization since the coup, they almost seem irrelevant. But sooner or later they will have to come to the fore, because they are essential to the solution of what André Joseph, the exiled spokesman of the teachers union, called "the greatest problem in Haiti—how to construct a civil society, the rule of law, democratic structures where there has been no democratic tradition at all."

Trade Union Struggles

The General Independent Organization of Haitian Workers (OGITH) claims eighteen thousand members in industrial unions, the public sector, and peasant cooperatives. Its leaders are young men who struggled up from hard backgrounds and entered the union

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movement through their jobs as electricians, clerks. They broke away from FOS, the leading confederation from the Duvalier period, after trying in vain to reform its antidemocratic practices. Schiller Marcelin, OGITH's general secretary, returned from an AFL-CIO seminar he'd attended in Washington to discover that in the eyes of FOS his new ideas made him a labor revolutionary.

Even before the coup, the difficulties of consolidating an independent labor organization in Haiti were enormous. Much of Haiti's economy consists of the "informal sector" of peddlers and other small-time self-employed people whom it's nearly impossible to organize. Those with "official" jobs, like the workers in the national brewery whom OGITH represents, try to negotiate with powerful industrialists like Michael Madsen who hardly recognize the union's existence and count on the army and state to intercede on their behalf. And there are less obvious difficulties too: the tendency of rank and file to confide too much power in leaders, the lack of education among the leaders themselves or of a willingness to be questioned and criticized, the siren song of political parties seeking alliances with mass organizations. During the 1990 election, OGITH was courted by PANPRA, the democratic socialist party. Though the two organizations became close, the labor group refused a formal alliance. "We're not against the idea of union-party ties," said Gesner Jean-Philippe, OGITH's acting secretary general. "But unions are too young and fragile now to preserve their independence." And in Miami, where he endures an impoverished, sometimes hungry exile, Schiller Marcelin pointed out to me the consequences an alliance would have had. "What if we'd done it? What if we'd gone in with PANPRA and Bazin? After the coup we'd have been finished."

The coup nearly finished OGITH anyway. Haitian businessmen talk about the forty-five thousand industrial jobs lost as a result of the embargo; but the firings and layoffs always seem to fall most heavily on unionized workers. Even a relatively benevolent employer like the Larco Frères Bottling Plant, which has modernized the factory, raised salaries, and built worker showers and a refectory after strikes, took advantage of the coup to break off all contact with the union and lay off 150 workers—all union members, according to OGITH. I toured the plant with Gesner Jean-Philippe and officials of the bottlers union and listened as workers described the overtime requests they can't refuse, sometimes two days and a night continuously with only three hours of break. Productivity and price have increased, while their wages have remained stagnant. A couple of workers laughed when I asked how many bottles of Larco Frères soda a week they can afford to drink. At wages of five Haitian dollars a day and a cost of thirty cents a bottle, soda is a rare treat.

We stopped by the plant's administrative offices, where one of the Larco *frères*—light-skinned, like most of the Haitian elite—received me graciously. He wondered if I had any suggestions to make. I mentioned goggles and earmuffs against the plant's flying glass and roaring machines. The Larco brother hastened to explain the lack and made a note of the request. "They have their little problems, and we have our big problems." OGITH's Gesner Jean-Philippe raised the question of wages and was cut off: "That's not my area, I'm in charge of production." Later Jean-Philippe told me that this visit was his first contact with the company since the coup.

As for the ordinary union work of organizing, the coup stopped it completely. I attended a meeting of OGITH's provincial leaders that was the organization's first since 1991. It was carefully scheduled to coincide with the stay of Dante Caputo, the U.N. mediator, who provided a certain safe cover as long as he was in Haiti.

OGITH has close ties to another labor group—CNEH, the teachers confederation. They share an emphasis on building institutions of civil society and avoiding what Roody Edmé of CNEH calls Haiti's "*surpoliticization*." One unlooked-for consequence of the coup has been the occasion it has given people like Edmé, in their enforced idleness from political activity,

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to think about the democratic struggle over the long term.

"It's not enough to speak of change," Edmé said in the garden of Carl-Henri Guiteau, the general secretary of CNEH. "We need to give it content." He flipped through a pamphlet recently put out by the FNCD, Lavalas, and Aristide's presidential commission. "*C'est flou*," Edmé said. "It's thin. It's just a list of things. 'To satisfy the fundamental demands of the people.' 'To promote national sovereignty and dignity.' Intellectuals shouldn't simply mirror the feelings of the people and then transform them into slogans. They have to work at their own level, and not oversimplify. Because when this priest speaks—this priest so loved by the people—economic theories melt under the rays of his sun." Edmé fluttered his fingers and his eyes gleamed. "But you have to put the donkey on the computer."

Instead of oversimplifying, Roody Edmé together with a dozen other Haitians has written a fifty-page document called "Mandate for a Change in History." "Ambitious title," he told me with a mischievous smile—and it is an ambitious document.

It speaks, in a difficult, technical French, of the need for various social contracts, of the relation between democracy and growth, of an investment policy that enriches Haiti rather than raping it, of the need to unleash market forces while creating corrective social measures, of the need to submit Haitian politics to economic rationality. It is subtle and honest and reflective, and as I was walking one hot noon through the mud and sewage of Cité Soleil, thinking of Roody and his document, I wondered what meaning it would ever have for the families whose houses are flooded with sewage after every rain, for the man hobbling on crutches alongside me whose leg was shortened four inches by soldiers' bullets the day after the coup, for the little children lining up for a free lunch of corn mush and beans.

To say none, to call it irrelevant, to accuse its authors of living in an imaginary country, seems to me the tragically wrong answer. At some point the ideas of people like Roody

A pig forages in Cité Soleil Jeff Perkell

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Edmé will have to be heard by people who call themselves democrats. In the meantime, Edmé is trying to figure out how to disseminate those ideas in simpler form without losing the substance. "I'd like this document to be turned into a vision, for which you need civil structures that Haiti has never had. I'd like for it not to end up in a library, which is where the political parties would put it. They're too consumed with the political struggle and they'll be even more so after the president's return. I showed it to KONAKOM and they had no real response. They admitted they have no economic program. The parties would turn it into another list."

Edmé mentioned one possible backer for radio or cassette dissemination: the non-profit Foundation for Development and Democracy, or FONDEM, whose president is none other than Evans Paul. At the same time that members of CNEH and other groups were rethinking the role of civil society, the elected mayor of Port-au-Prince and spokesman of the FNCD, in a multitude of hiding places, was rethinking the role of political parties. "I realized, after the experience of democracy in 1991," he told me, "the difficulty of doing political work without a democratic mentality. I saw that political groups have a limit, and the necessity for going beyond them, for tolerance, respect for law. Democracy has to be something in the mentality of all Haitians, based on universal principles. To take power in Haiti is very easy. It takes three weeks, one week, one day. To create tolerance is much harder. But it's a way to consolidate myself, too. I can't function as a politician without a democratic atmosphere."

And so in 1992 he formed an apolitical foundation whose goal is civic education about constitutional democracy. Among its sources of funding are the Agency for International Development, which gave money for an illustrated FONDEM calendar but insisted that a cartoon soldier with his automatic weapon be removed.

It is remarkable that a U.S. agency has seen fit to support an undertaking of Evans Paul. But his career has been one of the most remarkable in Haiti today, and it offers hope for the prospects of democratization itself. Under Baby Doc he was a radio personality going by the nickname K-Plim (pronounced Ka-Plume); he was also a street agitator and wrote plays whose message of liberation earned him quick closings and several beatings at the hands of the army. Even now a Haitian businessman refers to him as a "terrorist," and the U.S. embassy's political experts exchange coy looks of disapproval when his name comes up in conversation.

In the years after Baby Doc's downfall, Evans Paul formed a confederation of youth organizations and became an adamant opponent of the constitutional referendum and elections, sharing Aristide's view that they were manipulative tools in the hands of the U.S. government. But in October 1990 everything changed when, according to many Haitians who know him well, he invented the charismatic candidacy of Aristide and marshaled the organizational skills of the FNCD behind it. Paul's transformation from opponent to advocate of constitutional democracy, from activist to politician, from guerrilla playwright to foundation head, has traces of the opportunism that is Haiti's recurring political theme. It also holds all the risks that political compromise carries with the Haitian people. But as Paul told me, "We still need political men with political ambitions. But we need to avoid people with personal ambitions who want to become president to put it on their C.V. We need political men in the middle of political organizations, not owners of parties. The party, not the personality of the man, should run things." In other words, though he says that "Aristide's success came from not having had political ambitions," Evans Paul is no apostle of direct democracy. And many Haitians speak of him as the man to succeed Aristide as president.

"We Need a New Politics"

As the negotiations for Aristide's return grind on through the spring of 1993, Haitians both in Port-au-Prince and in exile are starting to wonder how things will be the second time around—whether lessons will have been learned. "I'm not sure," KONAKOM's Jean-Claude Bajeux told me. "Politics, it's power, not feelings. He can like me, like my wife, we call him Titid, but after I leave . . . I don't know."

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"I hope—no, I'm confident," said Evans Paul, "that the behavior will change."

But whatever the outcome of the negotiations, and whatever the makeup of a second Aristide government, the problem of a political culture whose strength was never tolerance will remain to be resolved. It's a problem that often preoccupies André Joseph in his twenty-first story apartment in a North Cambridge housing project where the teachers union spokesman and his family have spent the past year and a half in exile. Joseph's wife was having a difficult pregnancy in August 1991 when they came to Boston for treatment; their son was born two weeks after the coup and so has never seen his parents' country.

André Joseph is the son of a human rights lawyer who was murdered in 1988 by twenty knife wounds. It's a legacy that might have hardened, even destroyed him, but somehow Joseph has preserved a fine critical intelligence that seems neither soft nor bitter. "It was my father, and of course I suffered. But when it comes to politics I'm no choir boy. It's normal that when the Haitian military has an enemy they are going to try to eliminate him. It isn't a shock. What hurts is when the people who should be on my side do damaging things."

From his exile Joseph has written numerous articles for a Haitian newspaper, using a pseudonym. "Not for my safety," he said, but to disarm the assumptions that his position in the union would create. "To be heard." One of his articles came to the attention of Aristide, who asked to be put in touch with the author. Ironically, the author—using his real name—had not long before tried to make contact with the president and been refused. In any case, Joseph decided not to discuss his pseudonymous article with Aristide. "He would have offered me a future job, I would have turned it down, it wouldn't have led to productive discussion."

The burst of articles have run their course, and André Joseph has begun to doubt their usefulness. He is now writing what will be his last, on the relation between democratic government and civil society. We discuss the question of the *magouillards*—the leaders of PANPRA, the unionist Manicy who took a job with the coup regime, the various Haitians of varying degrees of evil who in one way or another crossed the line between compromise and betrayal. Joseph's willingness to understand the human motive behind the action might seem to some Haitians a dangerous relativism, an incipient *magouille* itself. "When you think of all the weaknesses a man has," he told me, "the hate he carries around in himself—I can't call them all traitors. You could become terribly cynical, but you need a certain suppleness of spirit, an openness, to be able to find common ground and have democratic discussions. We need a totally new politics. There will have to be unity with elements of the bourgeoisie, the workers, the military—even some old Duvalierists. We need to redefine the terms completely. If members of democratic organizations set the conditions for honesty, accountability, transparence, then that should be the basis for admitting the *magouillards*. Some of them won't be able to accept those terms. But the people will if Aristide encourages them."

On the same day that I walked around Cité Soleil, I hired a driver to take me up into the hills of Pétionville above the capital. I had spent so much of my time in Haiti thinking about the obstacles to democracy that I was afraid I'd lost sight of the only one that really matters now. The higher we climbed the cooler the air grew, the lighter the skin color of the people we passed, the larger the modern concrete and glass houses that seemed poised to take off over the city. A businessman once insisted to me that the Haitian elite's consumption is no more conspicuous than that of any other elite. But as the BMWs and four-wheel-drive jeeps came flying around the bends in the road, I began to feel that few other elites occupy a country, feed off it, and yet don't even seem to belong to it, let alone take responsibility for it, as the Haitian rich do. We parked the car on the edge of a hill and got out to look at the city. From here the slum of Cité Soleil was a hazy blur of brown and yellow.

"If people remain rich," the driver said, "that doesn't matter to me. Let them. What I want is for all the other people to have something to eat three times a day, a change of clothes, enough to send their children to school, a bed to sleep in that won't be flooded after every rain. It's not so much." □

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Jeff Faux

THE CRUMBLING CASE FOR NAFTA

A Look at the Realities

A Democratic member of Congress recently asked me over to his office to discuss the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). I explained why I thought it was a bad idea. The three members of his staff who were there agreed with me. The congressman frowned. "Well," he said, "You may be right about the economics, but we have to do something for [Mexican president] Salinas, don't we?"

From the time that the idea of a North American Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, Canada, and the United States was first seriously put forward by George Bush and his corporate allies, the Washington policy and media elite assumed that the *economic* case for the agreement was solid. Free trade is one of the most politically correct positions in the ideological mainstream. Editorialists and reporters, educated in the simplicities of Economics 101, were overwhelmingly for it. Academics and think-tankers, financed by multinational business and the Mexican government, could be counted on to provide a chorus of assent. And Small Business would, as usual, betray its own interests by following the leadership of its social superiors in Corporate America. Given this line-up, the opposition of labor and a few environmental groups could be ignored as Special Interest Protectionism. The only problem was the electorate; polls showed that most Americans did not know about the proposal, but when it was explained, they thought it was a bad idea.

Still, in the spring of 1991, Bush, with the aid of the Democratic leadership, won congressional approval for putting NAFTA on a "fast track." This means that Congress only gets to vote "yes" or "no" when the final treaty is submitted; no amendments. After fast track was voted for, the smart money in Washington, Mexico City, and Ottawa thought NAFTA was a done deal. NAFTA got another boost when Bill Clinton declared his support for the treaty, which Bush finally signed in December 1992, and promised to make it politically palatable by adding side agreements to extract promises from Mexico to honor minimum labor and environmental standards.

But as more and more Americans learned about NAFTA, the opposition increased. If a vote on Bush's treaty were held today, it would probably not pass the House of Representatives. The media and policy elite still dismiss this as a product of people ignorant of economics and swayed by jingoism.

No doubt ignorance and jingoism exist among the people. But the more fundamental problem for NAFTA is that its economic case is crumbling. Ironically, it now looks as though the only hope for the agreement lies in the political argument reflected in the congressman's comment. This is chillingly reminiscent of the long series of foreign policy disasters—Chaing, Batista, Diem, the Shah of Iran, Noriega—in which Washington placed the United States at risk by betting on one or another charismatic charmer whose supporters had convinced us that he was "our man."

The economic case for NAFTA rests on an assertion that the long-term benefits of increased trade will overcome the costs of "short-term" dislocation. Most NAFTA supporters acknowledge that U.S. jobs will be lost,

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community tax revenue shrunk, wages reduced, and environmental standards undercut. It is also admitted that the damage to incomes and jobs will be concentrated on those who are least able to adjust—workers in the bottom two-thirds of the family income distribution. (Other, less quantifiable, potential damages to the American economy have been ignored in the debate. For example, there is the risk of integrating Mexican financial institutions, regulated by a corrupt one-party regime, with an already fragile U.S. financial system. NAFTA makes it much easier for U.S. banks, security firms, and so on, to buy into Mexican industry. This creates the possibility that when the next debt crisis hits, the U.S. government will have to rescue the Mexican economy in order to protect major American banks.)

These problems have been dismissed by NAFTA supporters with the assertion that "In the long run, most people will be better off." Even among many Democrats, there is the feeling that the problem is simply that George Bush was insensitive to the transitory "short-term" impact on workers and the environment. The implication is that if we can just ease the short-term pain, the agreement will be a long-term boon for Americans.

One effect of this unexamined assumption about the future has been to reverse the conventional rules of debate. Normally, advocates of change have the burden of proof. But on the question of NAFTA, the media have decided that it is up to the critics to prove the negative case. However, growing domestic political resistance is beginning to force its advocates to explain what is wrong in the U.S. economy that NAFTA will fix, and how NAFTA will fix it.

After sifting through the evidence for long-term economic gain, one simply cannot come up with a credible economic argument that the benefits are worth the costs and risks. Certainly, if the benefits were there, the supporters would have found them. For at least two years, the economic and statistical resources of the U.S. government, the Business Roundtable, and the largest, most generously supported think tanks and university economics departments in America have devoted time, energy, and money to identifying all of the benefits of NAFTA. The intellectual rewards for their efforts are embarrassingly meager.

Over the last two years I have debated and discussed NAFTA with academics, members of Congress, business and labor leaders, and myriad lobbyists in the pay of the Mexican government. What follows are the major claims they have made, and why they do not hold up.

First, there is the assertion that NAFTA will in the long run create many more U.S. jobs than it will destroy. The U.S. International Trade Commission made several unsuccessful tries to come up with estimates of big job gains. After combing through all of the economic models on this point, it found that the highest estimate of a potential NAFTA contribution to employment in the United States was eight one-hundredths of one percent! It ignored studies showing losses of five-hundred thousand to almost a million jobs.

A study by pro-NAFTA economists Gary Hufbauer and Jeffrey Schott of the Institute for International Economics that is widely regarded as the definitive case for the agreement estimates that in the first five years 316,000 jobs will be gained and 145,000 lost, for a net increase of about 170,000 jobs. But in order to arrive at this number they had to assume that the current U.S. trade surplus with Mexico would double, which few people find credible. They also had to assume that although foreign investment to Mexico would grow substantially, none of it would represent investment shifted from the United States, which even fewer people find credible. But the most interesting thing about this study was what was *not* in it. As Thea Lee of the Economic Policy Institute discovered, the published version of their report omitted several columns from a table in an earlier manuscript that showed a job loss over the very long term from NAFTA. One of the authors later said they dropped the table from the book because there wasn't enough room.

The reason even the supporters can't find long-run job benefits for the United States in this agreement is that the current trade surplus

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with Mexico cannot last. The surplus is the single empirical "fact" that can be used in support of NAFTA. It was the only piece of evidence cited by Bill Clinton when he endorsed the agreement in October 1992. But the surplus—which has existed for only two years—primarily reflects the importation of U.S. machinery, equipment, and other capital goods that are being installed in new factories. The factories, of course, are being built in order to produce more consumer goods for export to the United States. Currently, the United States has a trade deficit with Mexico in practically every major category of consumer goods, including autos and consumer electronics. Another reason the surplus won't last is that the Mexican peso is now overvalued, which is making U.S. exports cheaper in Mexico and Mexican imports more expensive here. The overvalued peso reflects the Mexican government's desire to keep luxury imports inexpensive for its upper classes. After the next election, the peso will likely be devalued, which will help Mexican exports and hurt ours.

Actually, the assumption that the current U.S. surplus with Mexico is creating jobs is itself dubious. There is a bit of an economic mystery here. On the one hand, we hear continuous reports of U.S. investment, and therefore jobs, moving to Mexico. On the other hand, the trade statistics show a surplus of exports to Mexico over imports. Since it is traditionally assumed that an increase in a trade surplus results in net job creation for the exporting country, pro-NAFTA economists assert that the United States is already gaining jobs from trade with Mexico. It's just that somehow these job increases don't make news.

But it is equally, if not more, plausible that we are not seeing the new jobs created by the trade surplus because there aren't many. In effect, the increased exports simply represent a cross-border shift in the markets for U.S. goods. For example, last year, Smith-Corona shut down its last U.S. facility and shifted its manufacture of typewriters to Mexico. But many of its suppliers remained in the United States. So now, instead of shipping, say, $10 million worth of components to Smith-Corona in the United States, the components are being shipped to Smith-Corona in Mexico. The trade statistics jump by $10 million and economists claim that 200 new jobs are being created. But in fact, the increase in foreign exports has been matched by a decrease in domestic shipments. There have been no new jobs.

Some NAFTA supporters respond that these jobs will be lost anyway, and it is better to lose jobs to Mexico than to Asia, where they buy fewer U.S. goods. No doubt some jobs that go to Mexico are being diverted from Asia, although again, after two years of intensive search, supporters have come up with no hard evidence that this is the case. But given the fact that Mexico already has a wage advantage over many Asian competitors, and it has obvious locational advantages for the American market, this cannot be a major factor. In any event, the observation that we are already hemorrhaging jobs is hardly an argument for a treatment that will make the situation worse.

The second claim for NAFTA is that free trade will eventually create higher wage jobs for U.S. workers because Mexican workers will take jobs at the lower end of the skill ladder while U.S. workers will move up to higher wage jobs. This claim seems to fit with Bill Clinton's economic vision of a "high skill, high wage" America. But, if anything, NAFTA will undercut a high-skill, high-wage strategy. Historically, U.S. workers who lose jobs from imports do not go up the ladder to better jobs. They fall down the ladder, or off the ladder to unemployment. And Professor Ed Leamer of the University of California, a well-known advocate of free trade, concludes from his research that the effect of NAFTA will be an average wage loss of $1,000 per worker for 70 percent of the labor force.

At the time of the fast-track vote, NAFTA advocates dismissed concern over the seven to one ratio between U.S. and Mexican wages as unworthy of serious discussion. Economic theory, they insisted, says that low wages always reflect low productivity. From this they argued that firms were not moving to Mexico for low wages, but to take advantage of the tiny Mexican consumer market. But evidence from the real world now clearly shows that while the gap between U.S. and Mexican wages is

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enormous, the gap in productivity is small—and in a growing number of industries, labor productivity in Mexico is equal to or, in some cases, higher than in the United States. The work of Professor Harley Shaiken at the University of California at San Diego and an EPI study by Walter Russell Mead have been particularly useful in dispelling this myth. Both the *New York Times* and *Business Week* recently carried a series of articles from Mexico confirming the increasingly sophisticated skills and processes being employed by Mexican firms exporting to the United States.

A few weeks ago I accompanied Majority Leader Richard Gephardt and some other members of Congress on a trip to the Maquila area in Tijuana, Mexico, which is south of San Diego. Unannounced, we went to a Sanyo plant that makes television parts and assembles television sets for shipment to the United States. We asked the manager of that plant, who is also an international vice president of Sanyo, how labor productivity in his plant compared with that in the sister Sanyo plant in the United States. He replied that after four and one-half years, productivity in the Mexican facility was equal to that of the U.S. plant.

Next question: "What is the ratio of entry wages in your plant versus entry wages in the United States plant?" Without blinking an eye he said, "One to ten." This was no theoretical economist making that statement. This is the man who runs the plant in Tijuana and signs the checks.

The imbalance between wages and productivity also undermines the simplistic notion that U.S. workers can adjust to displacement from low-wage Mexican labor by being retrained. The point that is missed by pro-NAFTA liberals who hold this view is that where labor is cheap to hire, it is cheap to train. The broadened industrial base of Mexico now exports to the United States a vast array of increasingly sophisticated products made with increasingly sophisticated skills. There are over two thousand factories operating in Mexico under the Maquiladora arrangement—in which tariffs on Mexican goods being imported to the United States are eliminated according to the extent that their value is made up of components and raw materials of U.S. origin. Twenty years ago the vast majority of Maquiladoras were "cut-and-sew" apparel operations. Today, fewer than 10 percent are in apparel. Electronics, furniture, chemicals, auto engines, and a vast array of other goods are now being produced under this agreement by firms employing more than five hundred thousand workers. The experience shows conclusively that Mexican workers can be trained to make these products using state-of-the-art equipment organized in quality circles, teamwork production, and other high-performance management techniques.

NAFTA will eliminate the requirement that these companies buy U.S. imports in order to qualify for tariff reduction. The result will be to move even more intermediate processes to Mexico and to reduce even further the wage levels and job opportunities in the United States, particularly for people in the lower end of the income scale who have a difficult time finding any job. For example, there are some hundred thousand apparel workers in Los Angeles, most of them minorities or immigrants. The vast majority of these jobs will be eliminated by NAFTA. Given that every conceivable industry that might hire these displaced people is itself undergoing a shift south of the border, taking with them the demand for skills at the next rung up the ladder, the notion that retraining is the answer for those who will be unemployed is a cruel hoax.

How many jobs will actually flee to Mexico is anyone's guess. And it is not the most relevant question. The real long-term problem is that *just the threat to go to Mexico is already providing U.S. employers with an enormous hammer to hold over its work force*. After NAFTA, the threat to go to Mexico if workers don't give in on this or that collective bargaining issue will have substantially more credibility.

Thus, over the long haul NAFTA is the opposite of a high-skill, high-wage strategy. Rather, it will encourage American firms to seek a low-wage solution to the challenge of global competition. It is no accident that in

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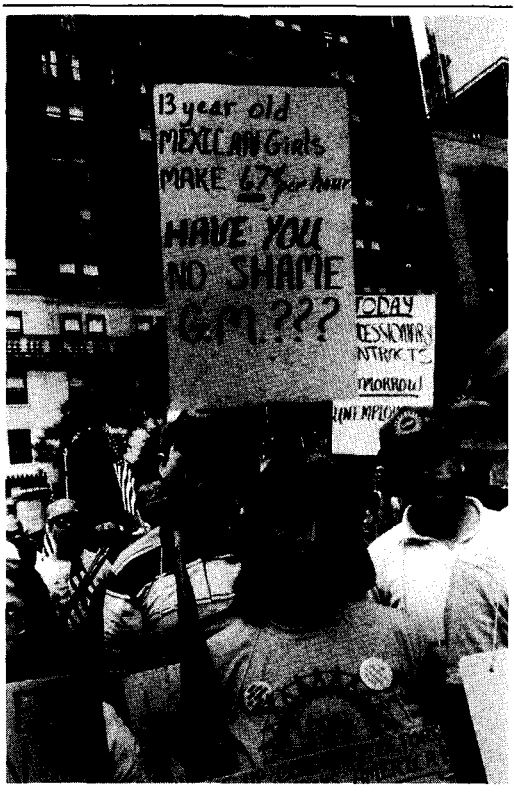
Mexico and Canada, as well as the United States, real wages for workers have been falling as free markets are expanding.

Next, there is the assertion that NAFTA will slow immigration. The same claim was made thirty years ago for the Maquila agreement. The Maquiladora program actually increased immigration. It drew workers to the border areas (where most of Mexico's growth will continue to occur because it is close to U.S. markets). Once there, workers got jobs at wages kept low as a result of collusion between an authoritarian government, captive unions, and business associations. Not being able to raise a family on the wages paid, workers soon quit, climbed the fences, and crossed the rivers to the United States. The lesson is clear: under current conditions in Mexico, if you stimulate low-wage employment in industries that export to the U.S. market, you will stimulate immigration. Moreover, NAFTA is likely to result in massive unemployment of poor farmers in the Mexican countryside who will not be able to compete with U.S. grain exporters. They will flee to the cities, and to the U.S. border. There is no longer any credible argument that NAFTA will reduce, much less stop, illegal immigration from Mexico.



Donna Binder/IMPACT VISUALS

Having lost the argument on the facts, NAFTA supporters retreat to the generalizations of abstract theory. "Well, everyone knows," goes the typical claim, "that free trade always creates benefits for both sides and that protectionism is bound to fail." The argument is specious.

First, the NAFTA debate is not about free trade versus protectionism. The two-thousand page document Bush signed is largely an investment agreement designed to protect American investors. Second, the assertion that history vindicates free trade is wrong. At best, history is ambivalent on this point. In some cases and under certain controlled conditions, such as the integration of Western Europe, freer trade has been beneficial. But in more cases than not, the major industrial nations of the world developed their economies behind high walls of protection. This not only includes Japan, Korea, and Taiwan in our own century, but the United States of America, which for the two hundred years prior to the end of World War II was a thoroughly protectionist nation. In order for the free trade case to work, even in theory, you need some very rigid conditions. One condition is full, permanent employment on both sides of the border. Another is no mobility of capital between the countries. It is obvious that neither condition has been met in the North American case.

But what if we give the proponents the benefit of all the doubt about free trade and NAFTA? In other words, what would the net benefits be if, for the sake of argument, we accept their unrealistic assumptions?

Here is where it gets interesting. Economic theory tells us that the benefits of free trade will show up in lower prices to the consumer. This is a result of assuming that larger markets increase both economies of scale and competition.

If one were to survey any group of reasonably informed observers of the U.S.

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economy, the problem of the U.S. consumer market not being big enough would be placed far down the list. We have by far the largest consumer market in the world, and foreigners who come here marvel at the high level of retail competition in the United States. If ever there was a trivial economic issue, this is it. Indeed, NAFTA is a solution in search of a problem.

According to Hufbauer and Schott, the "solution," that is, the total "efficiency" benefit to American consumers from NAFTA, comes to $2 billion in a $6 trillion economy. This works out to $8 a year for the average American. Or two cents per day. This is the fabled long-term benefit that we are told justifies the risks of unemployment, community dislocation, environmental degradation, increased social disruption in Mexico, and the expanded immigration that will inevitably result. This number is smaller than the statistical margin of error in the Gross Domestic Product. Statistically speaking, it is nothing.

As their economic case disappears, supporters are in the end left with one final desperate argument for NAFTA. It is not an economic argument; it is the political question asked by our friend the Congressman, "We have to do something for Salinas, don't we?"

The sensible response to that question is, "Why?"

They reply that Salinas is a "good guy," a reformer. The people around him are young, smart, and dedicated to the free market. The lobbyists in Washington virtually swoon over these "best and brightest" of all Mexicans.

Yet even unremitting advocates of free trade, those who also believe that low wages are in fact good for the world economy, have a hard time swallowing the sanctification of Salinas. Here is what the London *Economist* says: "The ugly truth is that Mr. Salinas and his band of bright technocrats, adored though they are by the great and good on the international conference circuit, wield power courtesy of PRI fixers and worse in the countryside." It adds, "Mexican politics is not without its violent side," and refers to claims that 164 members of the opposition PRD party have been murdered since 1988.

Difficult as it is for most of us to judge these charges, it is not in dispute that Mexico is a one-party dictatorship, which, driven by the international debt crisis, has embarked upon an economic policy of squeezing its work force to attract international capital. Nor is it in dispute that it lacks free trade unions, an autonomous environmental movement, and an independent judiciary that might challenge that policy. It is also obvious that Salinas and the PRI are depending on NAFTA to secure their power for decades to come. Under these circumstances, the idea that somehow we might influence democratic reforms after we have rewarded the regime with permanent economic benefits, which in practical terms we can never take back, flies in the face of everything we know about human nature and politics. You don't change behavior by rewarding it.

NAFTA supporters gravely warn that Mexico will have an economic crisis if Salinas suffers a defeat. By Mexico is going to have a crisis with or without Salinas, and with or without NAFTA. The peso is overvalued, and real estate and financial markets are going through speculative excess. These bubbles will burst as soon as the NAFTA issue is resolved. And what is the catastrophe if they do? Except for Americans who have bet on Salinas, it won't cause a ripple in the real economy of the United States, and investment will continue to flow to Mexico because labor will remain cheap. Salinas and the PRI may lose face. But how much pain and suffering is it worth to the bottom two-thirds of the U.S. labor force to keep a Harvard man and his cronies in political power in Mexico?

Can Bill Clinton fix this treaty with side agreements? It's unlikely. Clinton has promised to negotiate supplemental language to NAFTA that would assure all three countries abide by certain minimum labor and environmental standards and protection against a sudden unexpected surge in imports. But addressing the problems caused by the imbalance between wage and productivity disparities will require more than can be held in a side agreement. For example, the Mexican minimum wage in export industries would have to be raised to reflect true productivity differences, child-labor

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laws would have to be strengthened, and an entirely new system of environmental regulation developed. But this would require a reversal of the Salinas government's economic strategy for luring foreign capital that is the context for the treaty in the first place. Reversing the strategy would, in turn, require a virtual revolution in Mexico's political system; a breaking up of the power of the oligarchy that runs the Partido Revolucionario Institucional.

The problem goes beyond standards. In some cases, Mexico's labor standards on paper are superior to those in the United States. But they are not enforced. Thus, even in the unlikely event that Salinas would agree to drastically raised standards, he—and we and the Canadians—would have to agree to place the enforcement powers in the hands of an independent trinational commission that would have power to investigate, judge, and assess penalties, including trade sanctions against offending firms and industries.

And then there is the question of the costs of adjustment. These include the costs of dealing with dislocated U.S. and Mexican workers and the huge costs of environmental cleanup and protection that will accompany accelerated Mexican industrial development. Damage done in the Maquila areas of northern Mexico already runs into billions of dollars. Congressman Gephardt proposes to pay for the damage with a new tax on the increased trade with Mexico. The theory here is that those who benefit from NAFTA should pay the costs. NAFTA supporters are outraged. Because the costs are so high, they say, this would result in a higher tariff than presently exists. This would, of course, negate the whole effort to eliminate trade barriers. But if they are right, it is more evidence that the costs of NAFTA exceed the benefits.

None of this means that the United States should wash its hands of Mexico's economic troubles. Nor that we can never have economic integration among the three nations of North America. But the way to approach it is similar to the way the European Community (EC) integrated Spain, Portugal, and Greece. The EC insisted that political reform come first; before these countries could come in, they had to get rid of dictatorship and to build permanent credible democratic institutions. In contrast, Salinas has insisted that economic reform must come first. Then, at some unspecified time in the future, he vaguely promises that he and the PRI will turn their attention to democracy. It takes an extraordinary belief in spontaneous political transformation to bet the economic future of millions of Americans on that proposition.

The Europeans proceeded on the sounder principle that free trade only makes sense when its aim is to bring the workers in the poorer nations to the level of workers in the richer nations. The way to send that signal to all three nations is to say no to NAFTA. □

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Daniel Bell

DOWNFALL OF THE BUSINESS GIANTS

As American Capitalism Changes

In 1984, IBM, the largest and most advanced technology firm in the world, made after-tax profits of almost $7 billion. No other company in the world had ever made so much. Eight years later, in 1992, IBM lost $5 billion, more than any other company in the world. The sums either way, it should be noted, are larger than the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of more than ten of the hundred major countries of the world, including Bolivia, Iceland, Ghana, Costa Rica, Zimbabwe, Jordan, Panama, Cyprus, and Honduras.

This is no temporary occurrence. The company, which had as many as 400,000 employees a dozen years ago, will shrink to a little more than 200,000 in the next few years. The market value of the company, which had been about $75 billion, is now down to about $36 billion. The stock dividend, on which most of the pension firms in America had depended to fund their payments to retired employees, has dropped by more than 55 percent, from a $4.84 yearly dividend per share of stock to $2.16. The former chief executive officer of IBM, John Akers, has been fired, and for the first time an outside executive, Louis Gerstner, who was not raised in the IBM "culture," has been brought in to shake up the company. And it is likely that in the next two or three years IBM will be broken up into many different pieces, some sold off to other companies, some to stand alone within a loose IBM shell.

It is a stunning reversal of fortune. IBM was the dominant company in what is the world's most important industry, one on which almost all advanced technological progress depends—whether it is the satellites in the sky, the production of automobiles, the processing of all bank and other financial transactions, or even the organization of the machines on which this magazine is printed.

None of this means that the United States lead, or even dominance, in advanced technology is threatened. There is a multiplicity of companies that have already taken the lead in different fields. And IBM will remain a major player in a number of areas, such as large, mainframe computers. But the rise and fall of IBM in a thirty-year period does demonstrate some major structural changes taking place in U.S. capitalism. If one can sum it up simply in one sentence, it is the breakup of "big business," the huge megalith production firms, and, in a way, it repeats the story of similar breakups of the largest U.S. capitalist firms in the twentieth century. It is an instructive lesson in the nature of modern technology, in the way failure to understand it, and adapt, undermines the older established giants, and the way—as we have seen so often in economic history—that newer, flexible firms, led by more aggressive entrepreneurs, can, through competition, take the lead and reorganize an industry.

Three corporations have dominated the economic history of twentieth-century American capitalism. One was U.S. Steel, the prototypical corporation of the first third of the

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century. The second was General Motors, the prototypical corporation of the middle of the century. And IBM was the third. All three are now effectively shattered. The intriguing question is why has this happened in all three instances, and what will be the new, structural configurations of American industry.

U.S. Steel, with its belching fire, heat, smoke, steam, noise (and pollution from the smokestacks), was the symbol of the industrial age. Steel was heavy industry, the basis for the building of railroads, skyscrapers, automobiles, trucks, ships, cans for food, wires, and nails—and the armaments of warships, tanks, and the like, either making them or importing them.

U.S. Steel, formed in 1901 by J. P. Morgan & Co., was the first billion-dollar corporation in the world. Its strength and profits came from the integrated steel mills and the high volume of production. It exercised a quasi-monopoly, since it set the prices for the entire industry, through a system (later outlawed by the Supreme Court) called the "Pittsburgh-plus" system, whereby all prices, whatever the location in the country, were set at Pittsburgh plus transportation. So no customer, no matter how close to a steel supplier, could get a better price by saving transportation costs. At its height in 1953, the steel industry employed 650,000 workers.

Now almost all of this is gone. The major irony is that U.S. Steel was bought by a medium-sized oil company, Marathon Oil, and is now called USX and listed in the Fortune 500 industrials under petroleum refining. In the 500 metals section, the large steel producers Bethlehem Steel and LTV Corporation rank behind the aluminum companies.

What happened? One can adduce many factors so as not to oversimplify the situation. There were strong shifts in demand: the competition of aluminum for tin cans, of plastic for automobiles, the decline in construction. The newer products, such as jet engines, gas turbines, and nuclear reactors, require specialized alloy steels, which "big steel" was not making. (An important point here: big steel was producing high-volume but low-added-value steel, as was, for example, the nationalized British Steel in Great Britain. In Britain, firms had to import their specialty steels from Austria, which heavily reduced the terms of trade for the industry.)

But why did U.S. Steel and the American steel industry fail to adapt? The answer is that they had had a privileged monopoly position that was unchallenged for many years. They had heavy investments in their older processes. They did no research and development, and thus lagged behind when new processes were introduced. Australia had created the large-scale basic oxygen furnaces, which were quickly taken up by Japan and West Germany. The oxygen furnaces could produce two hundred tons of steel every forty-five minutes, as against the older open-hearth furnaces at U.S. Steel, which took eight hours for a similar tonnage.

But in recent years the most important change has been from the large, integrated steel mills, with their presumed economics of scale, to mini-mills, which do flexible, adaptive, specialized production, often for customized purposes, and can adjust quickly to new patterns of demand.

The paradox today is that the same process and technological cycle are being repeated in Japan, which had replaced the United States as the most efficient and major steel producer in the world. Japan's Nippon Steel Corporation's Kimitsu Works has long symbolized the might of Japan's big steel mills, the biggest mills of the biggest steel maker in the world's No. 1 steel-producing country. Yet three hundred miles from Kimitsu, in Okayama, the little Tokyo Steel Company opened a plant one-twentieth the size of Kimitsu but five times as efficient, undercutting by 30 percent the sheet-steel prices of Nippon Steel. Tokyo Steel is a "mini-mill."

As against the older processes, using iron ore and coke for making large quantities of molten steel, mini-mills feed scrap into electric furnaces to make molten steel that is usually converted into finished form in minutes. Nearly 30 percent of the world's steel is made in electric furnaces, which is double the amount of two decades ago.

What does steel have to do with IBM and

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computers? As a particular item, of course, they are largely different. But the processes of change, the simplifications of technology, the move away from integrated production, the growth of high-value-added, more flexible and adaptive firms, is exactly the pattern that has been taking place in the computer industry, if not in almost all manufacturing processes. Let me turn to one more case study—that of General Motors and the automobile industry.

General Motors was the quintessential corporation of the second third of the twentieth century. It featured what had become emblematic of American capitalism: mass production and mass consumption. Henry Ford had initiated mass production with the assembly line, interchangeable parts, and the extreme division of labor, all of which allowed for economies of scale and integrated production. This is what Antonio Gramsci called "Fordism." But General Motors, under the leadership of Alfred P. Sloan, went far beyond this and so transformed American society. What Sloan did was to introduce different cars for different segments of the auto market, from Chevrolets to Cadillacs, and create annual model changes so as to induce buyers to trade in their old cars and buy a new one every year. General Motors transformed the automobile from a utility vehicle to a status badge. The age of consumerism had arrived.

At its height, General Motors controlled half of the American car market and became the largest industrial corporation in America (as it still is). And it became one of the most profitable corporations in the world.

Last year, General Motors had an operating loss of almost $3.5 billion, and because the government forced GM to acknowledge unfunded health and pension liabilities, the corporation wrote off $23.5 billion from its assets, reducing the equity in the company by more than 15 percent. General Motors is now shutting down more than twenty plants, especially in the Midwest, and will be reducing its work force by more than a hundred thousand workers.

What happened? The "hinge" of the matter was the demand of the government for emission controls to reduce air pollution and for increased mileage economy on every car. General Motors, like Ford and Chrysler, had been producing the large, heavy "gas guzzlers," which had been despoiling the environment. This was the entry point for the smaller, compact Japanese automobiles, which today have about 30 percent of the American car market. And, if not for the steady pressure by the U.S. government on Japan to "voluntarily" reduce its exports, Japan would have an even larger share.

Yet why could not General Motors (and Ford and Chrysler) in time meet the Japanese challenge? Here the answer lay in a crucial technological and organizational difference—the difference between the "heavy" manufacturing styles of the American firms and the "lean" manufacturing of the Japanese companies.

One was the *kanban* (or just-in-time) system of production. Typically, Japanese automobile firms, such as Toyota, contract out 70 percent of their parts production to several hundred first-tier suppliers who are organized in a loosely knit *keiretsu* of interdependent companies, which, in turn, may subcontract their needs to thousands of tiny family-run machine shops that are the shock absorbers of Japan's economy. General Motors did not wish to lose "control" over so much of its production. But the Japanese firms maintain a strict discipline so that, as one may often see, hundreds of trucks line up outside of Toyota City, near Nagoya, to be there "just in time." In a second system, called *jidoka,* a high degree of autonomy is given along the assembly line to each worker, who can thus adapt tasks and supplies as needed for the orders at hand. In principle, any production system can apply these methods, and General Motors has been trying to do so, where at its new Saturn plant it is building a new car from scratch. But, typically, Saturn is being built outside the existing GM structure, and does not use the GM name in its advertising. GM has tried to create a different company culture. The importance of this is demonstrated by a chart in the *Economist* (October 17, 1992 supplement on the automobile industry), which points out that in Japan there are 61.6 suggestions per employee per year, as against 0.4 in the United

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States; that Japanese workers receive 380 hours of training as new workers, as against 46 in the U.S.; and that productivity in hours per car is 16.8 in Japan, as against 25.1 in the United States (and 36.2 in Europe!).

The major technological change is the creation of the "flexible factory," through computer-integrated manufacturing (which the Japanese call "holonic" production). Flexible production means not only the building of different versions of the same car on a single line, but also building completely different cars, thus lowering fixed costs and spreading the cost of production across five or ten cars. By combining variety with efficiency, this system also allows producers, such as Mazda, to become a "niche" manufacturer, making smaller numbers of specialized models on the production line.

Again, if one wishes to generalize, it is clear that the older model of the "classic" capitalist industrial firms, which gained their advantages by large size and integrated production, hoping for economies of scale in large production runs, is giving way to the flexible, adaptive factories responsive to the diverse and specialized products that the new technologies can produce. And that brings us to IBM.

In the incredibly fast-moving world of advanced technology, the "name of the game" is innovation—new products, new methods, new designs—then getting to the market first, establishing market share, and keeping it. It is a complicated game because innovation is always a gamble, the costs of innovation are always high, and one has to estimate the risks in moving ahead with new investments against recouping the costs or maintaining the profits of the products one has already invested in. In effect, one must not only play against outside competitors who are developing new products but also against one's self, that is, one's older divisions against the new. Until recently, IBM had been the master of the game.

In the 1960s, IBM took the first gamble and invented the mainframe computer industry. Previously, IBM had been a business-machine company (tabulators, accounting machines, and the like). But its new IBM System/360 (later 360/370) aimed to replace all other machines in the computing business. The new market was data processing and "number crunching." It was to be used by the Defense Department for all its systems, especially the large early-warning systems against possible Russian attack. It was to be used by the government for all record-keeping, especially Social Security and welfare payments for tens of millions of people. It was to be used by banks and insurance companies for processing all financial transactions. And it was to be used by all large businesses for inventory, scheduling, billing, and payroll records.

The "secret" of IBM's dominance—which few persons understood, because of the technical nature of the problem—was that the company had created and owned a pervasive industry architecture. The computer architecture consists of the instructions for the operating systems (which control the "traffic" of the different programs) in the machine, the instructions for programming, or the lines of code that programmers have to write to specify the sequence of steps for the particular purposes of the program, and the like. All the competitors had to play by IBM rules—writing software, manufacturing clones, running time-share centers—all being systems that IBM defined, and only IBM had mastered.*

For twenty years thereafter, as Charles Ferguson and Charles Morris report in their book *Computer Wars,* IBM's dominance of the industry was almost total. Large companies such as RCA/Honeywell and General Electric left the computer business, in some instances licensing some of their processes to Japanese firms. Smaller competitors sought to make "clones" (for example, computers that copied some of the IBM modes) or manufactured peripherals, such as disk drives or printers. IBM kept growing by more than 15 percent a year, making it the largest and most profitable industrial company in history.

* There was one other major system, and that was the UNIX operating system developed by A. T. & T. But that was used by A. T. & T. for its own computer-switching systems, and became available only in the last decade, when A. T. & T. was itself broken up by court decree.

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The Paradox of Jobs and Productivity

The received view has been that the U.S. economy suffers from low savings, low investment, therefore low productivity and fewer jobs. The constant refrain has been the need for greater productivity. Now there is, however, a paradox: a startling increase in productivity, with an unexpected result.

The crux of the matter is employment. Though the economy is now turning around, unemployment has not come down and few net new jobs have been generated. In other words, the economic recovery has come from belt-tightening and lower costs, not from job growth.

Productivity has long been a crucial problem for the American economy. In the 1980 decade, productivity had averaged only 0.8 percent a year, less than half that of Japan or Germany. Yet in 1992, productivity (outside the farm sector) grew by 2.7 percent, the largest increase in 20 years.

The problem has been the service sector. Productivity growth in manufacturing has been consistently high, averaging about 1.7 percent in the 1980s and recently about 3 percent a year, roughly the same pace as in Japan, but higher than in Germany. But productivity in the service sector—which accounts for about 70 percent of employment—has been only 0.1 percent a year, dragging down the entire economy.

It has been the new, startling rise of productivity in the service sector that accounts for the recent rise of productivity as a whole. This has been due to two factors. One is that the investment in computers and high tech—about $1 trillion dollars in the last decade—has begun to pay off as firms have learned to use the new systems. *But the other paradoxical reason has been the dramatic shake-out of jobs in the service sector, principally the white-collar jobs.* In the past decade, the investment of technology per service worker had doubled in real terms, but the ratio of clerical and administrative workers to managers and professionals had remained the same. By laying off so many white-collar workers—in the 1991 recession, white-collar workers accounted for 43 percent of the unemployed (as against 22 percent in the 1982 recession)—yet maintaining efficiency with the new technology, productivity in the service sector increased enormously.

This increase in productivity, which many economists had hoped for, is a mixed blessing. Rising productivity and lower costs means that American firms will be more competitive in the global economy, particularly vis-à-vis Japan. Unit labor costs increased less than 1 percent in 1992. Profits rose almost 30 percent from previous levels in the last quarter of 1992 and rose 15 percent for the year as a whole. All this strengthens American business. Yet a larger question remains for the economy as a whole.

The issue is how to "allocate" the gains from productivity. Higher cash flow provides more money for capital investment. And the Clinton administration is seeking to provide incentives for such investment. But will it expand the number of jobs? The labor force is growing at more than 1 percent a year, and these additional workers have to be absorbed. Real wages have fallen and so has real disposable income. Will the unions, which have been weakened in the past decade, now be able to demand higher wages? And, most important, what is the fate of the large number of white-collar and middle-management personnel who have lost their jobs? The new weight of white-collar unemployment gave the recent recession a different psychological character from the previous recessions and has contributed strongly to the loss of self-confidence and anxiety that is now felt.

There is one path for the Clinton administration, which is to seek to increase exports and thus increase employment. This gains added importance by the fact that the trade gap has again widened ominously, rising to $84 billion in 1992 after being cut to $65 billion in 1991. Overshadowed by the deficit, the problem of international trade may be the turning point, if not the stumbling stone, of the Clinton administration. —D.B.

From "The Changing Face of America," in *El Pais* (Spain, March 1993). □

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Why such an extraordinary company as IBM fell from grace, and so quickly, is inevitably a large and complicated story, involving the growth of a large corporate bureaucracy; the vested interests of its large and profitable mainframe division; the attacks by the U.S. government on its size and the effort to reduce its "proprietary" hold on the systems architecture; the competition from other firms, including to some extent Japanese companies, though in the computer business itself Japan was not the major threat, and so on. But if there is a central feature it is technology itself: the simplifications of technology and the extraordinary rapidity of changes that led to the two major innovations that dominate the computer field today: the speed of microprocessor chips, which can now process information at tens of millions of instructions per second, and the personal computer. The intriguing question is why IBM failed to keep up with the new developments. If there is a quick answer, it is that IBM tried to protect its proprietary advantages in the older systems, which had given it its dominance in the industry; and it could not do so.

To tell both stories briefly: the costs of data processing depend upon the speed of transmission. In 1957, the first A. T. & T. modem ran at 750 bits per second, transmitting data on its own phone lines. In 1974 the A. T. & T. modem ran at 9,600 bits per second. By 1985 the top-of-the-line IBM 370 mainframe was running at eight to ten million bits per second. The new technological change came with a microprocessor chip called RISC, or "Reduced Instruction Set Computing." It is an entirely new design that can also achieve high speed but, more important, can be used on PCs, or the "small" personal computers. RISC had been invented by a senior scientist at IBM, but because it was not compatible with the IBM 360/370, the company kept it secret for more than a decade, until other companies such as Intel or Sun Microsystems invented their own. IBM had developed a Systems Network Architecture, which was used by 50,000 data networks in the United States—about 60 percent of all companies—for airline reservation systems, financial-transfer networks, and the like. For eighteen years IBM held dominance in the field, yet the cost up updating the system, at the new speeds of the new chips, made it difficult for IBM to maintain its hold. In 1985, IBM imposed an umbrella software strategy called Systems Applications Architecture (SAA) on all its business units, seeking impose on hundreds of products an extra software layer to make each of the designs compatible with IBM proprietary devices. But all it succeeded in doing was to kill any capacity within IBM to initiate independent businesses that could be responsive to new market needs.

The crucial point here is that there is no longer a single computer industry, but many different industries, using the diverse technology for different purposes, and no single company, clinging to proprietary or its own ownership devices can stand out against the flood tide. The PC, or small personal computer, and following it the laptop, or the smaller notebook computers, are the major case in point.

When the role of the computer became decisive in the 1960s, the theme arose that "knowledge is power," and that access to computers would be crucial for those in business and universities. Since the mainframe computers were so huge and expensive, it was argued that the government should guarantee access by treating computers like a public utility, the way electricity and telephones were regulated by government agencies (as they still are in most instances).

The personal computer began when a number of young inventors and entrepreneurs, in 1975, took the microprocessor, hitched it to a circuit board, plugged that into a television set for display purposes, and out came the Apple 1. In a short time, dozens of small entrepreneurs were creating these small computers, which, in short order, could sell for a few thousand dollars (as against several hundred thousand for a mainframe) and have a speed and memory as large as the older mainframe computers.

The personal computer was a social and technological revolution. It "democratized" computing and gave the small business person, the scientific researcher, and the engineer the computer power they needed. (Today, in many American universities, individual personal computers are required for those taking science and business courses.)

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IBM jumped into the market and, with its superior resources, went in three years from zero to four billion dollars in sales, capturing 80 percent of the PC market. But there was one crucial difference in the nature of the PC. IBM had built its prosperity on controlling the proprietary standards, so that its machines did not work with those of other makers. IBM customers were "locked into" that system and IBM earned oligopoly profits. But the PCs are built with the same microprocessor chips, and run the same "off the shelf" software, and can connect to machines made by rivals. This standardization and "open" computer architecture led the way to hundreds of new entrants in software, in components, and in peripherals such as printers and disk drives.

Over the years, the fundamental change in computers has been the move from hardware (the physical structure of the machine) to software, which is the operating system that directs the computer to diverse tasks, and to programs that allow the user to do specific tasks (such as word processing, or financial spread sheet analysis, and the like). And once there has occurred the explosion of "stand alone" PCs and work stations, the next step is networking, or hooking these up through common standards. In the case of the PCs, the initiative has passed to the software producers, in particular the sensationally successful Microsoft Corporation started by Bill Gates, a Harvard dropout.

The cornerstone of IBM's strategy was an alliance with Microsoft, which has become the world's biggest supplier of software for personal computers. Microsoft created the DOS operating system for IBM's personal computer. But once IBM adopted Microsoft's system, it no longer controlled the "interfaces" with other products. Its lock was broken. In the last year, Microsoft became impatient with IBM's proposed system to integrate the computer networks into a single system (the OS/2) and broke its alliance with IBM to sell its own product, called Windows. Windows does only some of the jobs of the OS/2, yet that is what the customers wanted. In 1992, Microsoft's Windows 3.1 was selling a million copies every two weeks. With its proprietary lock broken, IBM found the market swamped by "clones," such as Compaq and Dell, while Microsoft was selling the technology once sponsored by IBM to any small computer maker. Technology and the market had broken IBM's dominance.

Today, IBM holds about half the world market in mainframes, about 15 percent of the market in minicomputers (a field it had not entered strongly), but only 10 percent of the personal computer market, where it had hoped its future would lie.

The breakup of U.S. Steel and General Motors and IBM does not mean the collapse of American capitalism. It means the end of an older way of business, of the integrated companies that sought to dominate an industry, which was the feature of the older industrial capitalism. In the nature of technology today, no large firms or even group of firms can exercise monopoly or oligopoly control of an industry or a market.

In the area of "high tech" the United States is still, overall, the major country in the world economy. For the first time since 1984, the biggest microchip maker is Intel, which has been at the forefront of developments in personal computers. Hewlett-Packard is the world leader in computer printers. A. T. & T. is first in the one billion dollar U.S. market in cordless phones. And Motorola leads the world in cellular phones. And while the United States is still running a large trade loss in the overall economy, it runs a trade surplus in what the Commerce Department calls "leading edge" products, running to about $35 billion in 1992.

The larger point is that the technological and product cycle that we have witnessed is not restricted to the United States alone, but is a common feature of technological change. Thus, in steel, Japan today faces, with Korea, the problem that the United States once faced with Japan. In Korea, the twenty-year-old steel maker, Pohang Iron and Steel Co., known as Posco, has become the third largest mill in the world, and as Korean steel is cheaper, it now exports more than 3.5 million tons to Japan. In automobiles, the newly developing countries, such as Korea and Malaysia, are building their own cars and, as in the case of Korea, have sought to break into the American market. In the computer area, four

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Japanese firms created an oligopoly in D-RAM (dynamic random access chips), which are the main memory and storage components of the computer. By 1990, the Japanese market share had risen to more than 80 percent. Yet the cartel was broken by the entry of South Korean companies into the market by underselling those firms with those chips, which are relatively easy to design. Today a number of major Japanese firms (Oki Electric, Sanyo Electric, Matsushita) are withdrawing from the race to build new generations of chips, while the major Japanese chip firms—Toshiba, NEC, Hitachi, Fujitsu—are trying to diversity and produce more specialized chips.

If there is a single, general conclusion to be drawn from this account, it is that in manufacturing—if not in other areas as well—the system of mass production and huge factories (such as the River Rouge plant in Detroit) is now obsolete, and that smaller, flexible plants, and flexible companies that are more adaptive, become the means of survival and success. In the areas of production there is a "downsizing" of structures to allow for greater "customization" and adaptation to consumer demands. The small flexible plants are more responsive, they can change production schedules or products more quickly, they require less movement of materials, and, because of smaller size, create better solidarity of the work force. These are the changes that the new post-industrial technology and the competition in a global economy force on all enterprises. That is the route into the twenty-first century. □

dissent

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Alice H. Amsden

ASIA'S INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

"Late Industrialization" on the Rim

Socialism presented a serious conceptual challenge to capitalism, but never managed to threaten it in the marketplace. "Late" industrialization in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan has evolved squarely within the capitalist fold. But because it has, in fact, succeeded in undermining the competitiveness of advanced capitalist countries, its challenge is unprecedented. Never before has the West sustained a serious blow to its economic hegemony.

Even conceptually, late industrialization has bamboozled Western economists. Whether on the left or right, they have had a hard time explaining why, of all poor countries, South Korea and Taiwan have managed to industrialize or why, of all high-income countries, Japan continues to chip away at American competitiveness.

In part, economists' incomprehension is attributable to cultural differences. Their knowledge of oriental history and institutions is limited. Nevertheless, East Asians don't appear to have nearly as much trouble in understanding Anglo-Saxon economies (many study in the United States) as Anglo-Saxons have in understanding East Asian economies. Moreover, in late-industrializing countries such as Brazil, India, Mexico, and Turkey, the development process shows many of the same characteristics as in East Asia, even if growth has been slower. The phenomenon of late industrialization, while not culturally distinct, is baffling.

The trouble seems to lie precisely in the fact that late industrialization is capitalist. As such, economists find it inconceivable that capitalist development does not conform to their own theories about how it should work. Preconceptions blind our understanding of what is, in fact, extraordinary: not just the rise of a serious challenge to Western economic hegemony but also the demise of underdevelopment in once abjectly poor countries.

From basket cases in the early 1960s, South Korea and Taiwan became the first ex-colonies in the twentieth century to achieve economic development, meaning a sustained increase in per-capita income, at relatively full employment, with an absence of severe balance-of-payments constraints. What is more, income distribution in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan has been fairly equal, certainly by American standards.

By the early 1980s the income of the top fifth of the population exceeded that of the bottom fifth by a factor of only 4.0 in Japan, 4.3 in Taiwan, and 4.9 in Korea, compared with as much as 10.7 in the United States (whose income distribution lies closer to that of the typical third world country than to that of the typical European social democracy). Statistical problems bedevil income distribution comparisons, but the orders of magnitude are unmistakable, and are corroborated by other facts. The wage differential between production workers and general managers tends to be about 4:1 in East Asia but at least 10:1 in the United States.

The absolute wage level achieved by workers in Taiwan and Korea is also impressive. The best-paid male production workers now typically earn more than the average wage in the American South or in the British North. Depending on the exchange rate between the

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yen and dollar, the wages of workers in Japan are surging ahead of those in the United States. In 1991, the World Bank estimated in its annual *World Development Report* that per-capita income in Japan was $26,920, compared with only $22,560 in the United States. It was about $6,500 in Korea and Taiwan.

East Asia's achievement of fast increases in per-capita income with relatively small deviations about the average makes its growth model worthy of serious study. The process of late industrialization, and what it portends for American business and labor, are investigated below.

Did East Asia Grow by "Getting the Prices Right"?

Anglo-Saxon economists have almost unanimously regarded late industrialization as nothing analytically new. In a seminal book on Japan, *Asia's New Giant*, the editors, Hugh Patrick and Henry Rosovsky, "gently suggest that Japanese economic growth was not miraculous: it can be reasonably well understood and explained by ordinary economic causes." Whatever quaint characteristics of late industrialization have excited economists' curiosity—say, Japan's permanent employment system, its quality control circles, or its subcontracting networks—have usually been interpreted as culturally determined (by Confucianism) and unreplicable. Why the insistence on business as usual?

The major reason lies in the dangers American mainstream economists and policymakers perceive in a successful development model that does not feature free markets and an embrace of laissez-faire. The American establishment has staked its reputation on the superiority of liberal capitalism, and any association by successful industrializers with another type of growth model is extremely threatening. The American establishment interprets Japan as being successful by dint of being good at what the United States has historically been good at—generating high rates of investment in physical capital and education. For the United States to regain its competitive edge the message is impeccably conservative—save more and generally do more of what the United States has always done in the past!

The fear of illiberalism is most pronounced in the Bretton Woods institutions (the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and the World Bank [or just plain "Bank"]) which are responsible for policing world markets for breaches of laissez-faire. When the Bank's internal Operations Evaluation Department concluded in a confidential report that the Bank had underestimated the role of the government in East Asian development, the immediate response of Bank officials was to obstruct the report's publication.

Top management of the Bretton Woods institutions is made up of country delegations, with the American delegation—appointed by the U.S. Treasury—wielding the most influence because it is the biggest financial contributor. With neoliberalism ensconced in the U.S. Treasury, economic policies in the IMF and Bank since the early 1980s have hammered away at the need for developing countries to open their markets (to increase American exports?) and liberalize, deregulate, and privatize their economies (to prevent further "Asian-style" miracles?). The Bretton Woods institutions, moreover, are empowered to impose their will on borrowers. They attach "conditionality" to their loans, and unless their conditions are met, loans are denied, and a tacit seal of approval to borrow in private financial markets is withheld, making it hard for borrowers to raise capital independently.

Middle management at the Bank and Fund consists of thousands of professional economists. Most genuinely regard the development failures of Africa, South Asia, and Latin America as a function of excessive government economic intervention. They link state intervention in the third world with rampant rent-seeking, restrictions on trade, and a misuse of foreign loans (degenerating into the 1980s debt crisis).

In short, the policies of the powerful international financial institutions during the Reagan-Bush era have celebrated market determination of prices, including the pivotal prices

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of capital and foreign exchange. Given the disasters of many poor countries with extensive government intervention, and given the overwhelming mainstream support for market-driven growth (reinforced by the collapse of central planning), the key question is: did, in fact, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan industrialize by "getting the prices right"?

"Capitalism On A Global Scale"?

Heterodox economists have not merely downplayed the originality of late industrialization. At one time they denied its very existence. One of Marx's great insights was to recognize that capitalism, while progressive, also tended under certain conditions toward stagnation and decline. A consequence of this, as postulated by the brilliant political economist Paul Baran, was imperialism and the subjugation of peripheral countries to the needs of more powerful capitalist states. What, however, was for Baran a hypothesis about imperialism became an article of faith for many of his epigones. They invented "dependency" theory to prove that imperialism precluded the capitalist development of the third world. The industrialization of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan was not supposed to happen.

The grip of theory over reality is graphically illustrated by the response of Japan's Marxists to their own country's economic growth. At first they argued that Japanese capitalism was an appearance; Japan was still feudal. Then they maintained that Japan was experiencing an absolute decline in its living standards. When this line of argument proved untenable, they suggested that Japan was merely an American colony. Then they shifted and claimed that Japan was helping American capitalism! Reality was always surpassing theory, which partly contributed to the eclipse of Japan's large Marxist academic population.

With the death knell sounded for dependency theory by East Asian development, heterodox economists began to emphasize the more progressive aspects of capitalism, arguing that industrialization in East Asia and other parts of the third world reflected the combined, if uneven, spread of capitalism on a global scale. This interpretation is in keeping with Marx's own view of industrialization in India, which he interpreted as a mirror image of industrialization in Britain, symbolized by the arrival of the railroad and the transfer to India of British technology, capital, and rules of competition.

In a new interpretation of Marx's theory, a profit squeeze in high-wage economies sends capitalists scurrying to poor countries in search of cheap labor (and not just raw materials, as was maintained in the past), which in turn triggers third world manufacturing activity. Relocation of labor-intensive industries in developing countries is the catalyst of their growth. In another interpretation called "global Fordism," stagnation in high-wage economies drives capitalists to poor countries in search of cheap *skilled* labor, leading to plant closings in the advanced countries and investments in mass production abroad.

These "world systems" theories have complemented mainstream arguments to the effect that the multinational firm is the agent of third world industrialization. Whatever the political underpinnings, in both cases capitalism supposedly expands into a global system the way dots of red ink radiate to all corners of a map. The scatter spreads from the center and the spots all have more or less the same hue.

This leads to a second important question: Is late industrialization merely a spin-off of advanced capitalism or does it represent an historically new capitalist paradigm, with its own distinct set of institutions?

Industrialization in South Korea and Taiwan eventually exploded in political democracy, but dictatorship was the rule for many years. Both countries brutally denied trade-union rights in the name of a national emergency to thwart communist insurgency. Strikes were prohibited, and labor leaders spent long years in jail. There was not even a Labor Ministry in South Korea; labor affairs were handled by the Korea Central Intelligence Agency. The factory women who wasted the years of their youth fueling East Asia's export boom lived highly regimented lives.

It is true that beginning in the late 1960s

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South Korea and Taiwan experienced high real-wage increases. Real wages rose faster in Korea than in a comparable growth phase in Great Britain, the United States, or even Japan. Nevertheless, accident rates in Korea have been extremely high and hours of work have been among the longest in the world. For example, in Korea's efficient integrated steel mill, the Pohang Iron and Steel Company (which, ironically, recently supplied technical assistance *to* the United States Steel Corporation), workers have received only two days off per month!

A final question, therefore, is: can labor repression explain Korea's and Taiwan's exceptionally fast growth?

Industrialization Through Learning

To understand East Asian industrialization, one must remember what lay at the root of Western economic hegemony. As every schoolchild knows, starting around 1760 innovations such as the spinning jenny, the water frame, and the steam engine transformed British industry and society and caused productivity to reach unprecedented heights. Technological progress was realized through trial and error in a particular set of institutions that featured the small-scale firm, under the aegis of the owner-entrepreneur. The role of the government was limited to providing the infrastructure and administrative laws and regulations necessary to promote private enterprise.

Similarly, in the Second Industrial Revolution a century later in the United States and Germany, what permitted these countries to leap-frog ahead of England in per capita income was another wave of technological change. Innovations transformed the chemical and heavy electrical industries of Germany, and a radically different system of mass production evolved in the United States. New production methods were dependent on technological breakthroughs in machinery, energy, and transportation.

All these innovations went hand in hand with a distinct set of institutional arrangements. Large, multidivisional enterprises such as General Motors, Siemens, and Hoechst eclipsed the small-scale firm. The general corporate manager overshadowed the owner-entrepreneur. Innovation itself increasingly became a matter of systematic research and development (R&D) rather than trial and error. The role of the government was still rather modest, but greater than in the past. By the 1900s, the American economy had some of the highest tariffs in the world. Nevertheless, despite these changes, like England a century earlier, the United States grew rich by dint of original technology. That is what sustained its extraordinarily high wage levels by world standards.

When, after World War II, we come to the rise of manufacturing activity in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, as well as, say, Turkey, India, Mexico, and Brazil, something is quite distinct. Their industrializations bear no resemblance to the First or Second Industrial Revolutions in one critical respect. Even their leading enterprises do not have the competitive weapon of new technology with which to industrialize. Such "late" industrialization, as it may therefore be called, has been solely a process of borrowing technology that has already been developed by more advanced countries. Late industrialization is a pure case of "learning."

Of course, earlier industrializers learned from one another. Great Britain absorbed know-how from the Italian city states, the United States received technical assistance from Great Britain, and so forth. But what makes "late" industrialization unique is that even its leading enterprises have had to borrow technology and win market share without the competitive asset of new products or processes, the hallmark of the First and Second Industrial Revolutions.

Thus, the general properties of an industrialization based purely on learning appear to be quite distinct from those of an industrialization based on pioneering technology. In answer to a question posed earlier, "late" industrialization does have an original set of institutions associated with it. It *is* a new capitalist paradigm.

For one thing, firm structure is different. Instead of either small-scale enterprise or the

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multidivisional firm, late industrialization has been characterized by the diversified business group, as exemplified by the *zaibatsu* in Japan, the *chaebol* in Korea, and *los grupos* in Latin America. All big businesses are diversified, but the multidivisional enterprises that emerged from the Second Industrial Revolution typically retained a technological focus—say, cars in the case of General Motors, electronics in the case of Siemens, and chemicals in the case of Hoechst. By contrast, the big business groups of late industrialization have diversified into technologically unrelated industries because they have no proprietary technology to exploit. Their subsidiaries are organically linked by tradition or the persistence of family management. They are formidable competitors because they can shift resources from subsidiary to subsidiary, and can take a long-term profit-maximizing view.

The "strategic focus" of early and late industrializers has also taken distinct forms. Big business in advanced capitalist countries attaches the highest status and financial rewards to R&D, design, and other staff functions related to innovation. The strategic focus is on overhead. By contrast, the emphasis of the late-industrializing firm has been on the shopfloor, because it is here where borrowed technology must be made to work and eventually improved to the point where it becomes a competitive weapon, as in the case of Japanese quality control systems and product improvements. It follows that whereas the owner-entrepreneur was the hero of the First Industrial Revolution, and the corporate manager was the protagonist of the Second, the production engineer is the dominant figure of late industrialization.

East Asian conglomerates are almost entirely nationally owned. There is practically no foreign capital in the "commanding heights"—those industries that are considered critical for development (including banking). Foreign firms have been allowed to operate in Korea mostly for purposes of exporting labor-intensive products, for developing service industries, or, recently, for transferring specialized technologies. Reality, therefore, does not provide much support for the view that late industrialization is merely the spread of a seamless web of capitalism on a global scale, spearheaded by the multinational firm.

Japan and increasingly Korea and Taiwan are major investors in R&D. But their heritage as technology borrowers still manifests itself. They continue to invest more heavily in plant-level production skills than most American firms. They tend to integrate more tightly shopfloor production efficiency and new product development. It is precisely against this combination of learner and innovator that corporate America has been unable to compete.

Finally, whether in India or Turkey, East Asia or Latin America, a general characteristic of late industrialization is a developmental state. Because late industrializers do not have the competitive weapon of new technology, their governments have had to play a far more interventionist role than in the past. Not only have they protected new and other industries from foreign competition, they have also targeted strategic firms and industries for special incentives, including loans at concessionary interest rates, subsidized rents, and restrictions on foreign investment.

For example, South Korea had a three-tier financial structure for the first twenty-five years of its development. It was characterized by a "curb" market interest rate (set competitively by market forces at around 35 percent in real terms), a commercial bank rate (set by the government at around 2 to 3 percent in real terms), and a rate on foreign loans. Due to inflation and the relative constancy of the exchange rate (also set by the government), the real interest rate on foreign loans was effectively negative for borrowers. Not all three prices that existed side by side in Korea's capital market could have been right, and the negative real interest rate on foreign loans was fundamentally distorted in a capital-scarce country.

In answer to the first question posed earlier, therefore, we can say that industrialization in East Asia has certainly not been a matter of "getting the prices right." Indeed, given that the governments of Japan, Korea, and Taiwan

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have used subsidies extensively to develop manufacturing activity, one could say that "late" industrialization has been a process of getting the prices "wrong."

What Accounts for East Asia's Effectiveness?

This finding is somewhat baffling. On the one hand, government intervention in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan has been extensive and has involved distortions in the price of capital and imports subject to protection. Yet government policies seem to have resulted in unprecedented economic growth. On the other hand, many of the same policies have had far less felicitous effects in Latin America, South Asia, and Africa.

Variations in economic performance *among* late industrializers that have all experienced extensive government intervention relate to the different principles governing subsidy allocation. In the slow-growing late industrializers, subsidies have tended to be allocated according to the principle of giveaway. Private businesses have simply been blanketed with favors. By contrast, in the fast-growing late industrializers, subsidies have tended to be allocated according to the principle of reciprocity, in exchange for concrete performance standards that are monitored by a well-trained, elite government bureaucracy. Governments in East Asia have protected firms from foreign competition, but have set strict export targets for them to meet. They have given big business concessionary credit, but they have prevented capital flight or illegal exports of capital to private bank accounts. Big business has been allowed to import technology, but it has been obliged to invest in building its own technological capabilities. Finally, no impediments to long work hours and strict work rules have obtained, but business has had to pay labor high rates of real wage increase and to train it. In an industrialization based on learning, education is obviously key.

East Asian governments allocated subsidies more sensibly than elsewhere not because they were smarter but because they had more power over business, a power that reflected deep underlying historical and social conditions. The postwar governments of Taiwan and South Korea inherited a nationally owned banking system from Japan, their erstwhile colonizer, and control over the purse (despite exhortations to "privatize" from Washington) enabled them to impose performance standards as a condition for subsidies. Moreover, not just South Korea and Taiwan but also Japan were transformed by land reforms in the late 1940s (which, uncharacteristically, received American blessing). Reform decimated a class of wealthy landowners who otherwise constituted a serious challenge to government authority.

With respect to the third question about labor repression posed above, it is undeniable that East Asian countries have had highly authoritarian political systems. Nevertheless, it is hard to argue that labor repression was any greater in East Asia than in, say, Brazil, Argentina, or Turkey. Therefore, East Asia's exceptionally fast growth cannot be attributed to extraordinarily harsh political repression. Sadly, labor repression, in tandem with military rule, appears to be a general property of late industrialization. It seems more correct to argue that in all late-industrializing countries the state has disciplined labor. What makes East Asia special is that the state has also disciplined capital.

Paralysis From Ambiguity

Ambiguity always characterizes economic development or decline, since no one can ever be sure whether short-term or even seasonal fluctuations represent a temporary or permanent deviation from a long-run trend. It was unclear for at least half a century whether the British empire was decaying. Now it is uncertain whether the East Asian economies will continue to grow or whether the American economy will continue to decline.

Adding to the equivocacy of American economic performance is the enigmatic role played by Japan, the most successful late-industrializing country and the only one thus far to come anywhere close to challenging the United States at the world technological

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frontier. Has, in fact, Japan made a real impact on U.S. competitiveness?

The Reagan and Bush administrations doubted that Japan was a bona fide threat. They believed that Japan's only economic advantage over the United States lay in its closed markets, a view echoed by a large Japan-bashing lobby and segments of the American work force. Many economists supported their stance. Most international comparisons of productivity using aggregate statistics showed the United States still enjoying a comfortable lead over Japan (even in automobiles!). Moreover, while U.S. manufacturing activity as a share of gross national product declined after the Second World War (with services accounting for a larger slice of the pie), since the 1970s the share of manufacturing in total output has stabilized. There is no evidence of further "de-industrialization."

Yet plenty of evidence supports the opposite view. On an industry-wide basis American competitiveness looks good, but many American industries are buttressed by Japanese investment. Company to company, Japan tends to be the better performer, especially in mid-tech and electronics industries. Moreover, productivity data for any given year register the effects of *past* investment. They do not capture how productivity is likely to behave in the future as a result of current investment rates, which have been much lower over the last decade in the U.S. than in Japan. Finally, many case studies support the view that if American companies cannot penetrate the Japanese market (whose manufacturing industries are now virtually denuded of tariffs or quantitative restrictions), this is because the United States cannot offer products agreeable to Japanese buyers.

An example comes from American and Japanese head-on competition in a third market, Korea. In 1985–87 the United States forced Korea to liberalize one hundred specific manufactured goods in which American firms supposedly excelled. Simultaneously the dollar depreciated against the yen by 65 percent and the Korean government offered domestic importers subsidized credit to "Buy American." Sure enough, imports poured into Korea as a consequence of liberalization, but ironically, most of the imports came from Japan! Koreans bought Japanese goods despite a weak dollar and other incentives to "Buy American" because Japanese products were judged to be of better quality and Japanese companies slashed their prices to offset a higher yen.

The impact of all this competition on American incomes is itself ambiguous. On the one hand, loss of market share has prompted American companies to cut back employment, close plants, and speed up production for remaining workers. Optimists argue that despite its high social costs, "restructuring" may help American firms compete better in the future. Pessimists claim that not nearly enough fundamental restructuring has occurred to make a difference.

If Japanese competition has killed American jobs, hot money from Japan has financed the American budget deficit. For better or worse, this has allowed at least *some* Americans (including many workers) to live better than otherwise during the past few years. Tariff barriers against Japanese goods have also induced Japanese firms to establish production facilities in the United States. At the end of 1991 Japan's direct investment in the United States was estimated at roughly $85 billion. Over 350,000 Americans are employed in Japanese companies, either in manufacturing or services.

Finally, the response to such investment has also been mixed. Some observers (Robert Reich, for one) argue that Japanese firms based in the United States have revived regions of the Rust Belt and have reinforced domestic technological capabilities. Others dwell on the alleged tax evasion, sexism, and anti-unionism of such investors. American trade unions have tended to be lukewarm to the Japanese influx, both because it creates a lot of organizing work and because Japanese factory life is oppressive. Yet some of the ethnographic evidence (scholarly and anecdotal) indicates that, by and large, Japanese bosses are generally praised by American workers (who, on average, do not belong to unions by a ratio of roughly 8 to 1).

What is altogether free of ambiguity is the response of top managers to the Japanese

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challenge—it has been class-bound. Those Japanese practices that suit their profits and prejudices they tend to favor, and those that don't they tend to oppose. High on the hit list of corporate America is industrial policy and the permanent employment (no-layoffs) practices of corporate Japan.

Ultimately, how one judges the influence on the United States of late industrialization in general and Japan in particular depends on the alternative with which one compares it. Relative to a socialist model, this new brand of industrialization offers a modest alternative. But exactly because of its modesty, it has a chance of succeeding in the present American context. A strong case can be made for using the progressive aspects of the late-industrializing model to hold American corporations to higher standards, while fighting against late industrialization's seamier side.

Reciprocity

At the heart of successful late industrialization is a reciprocal principle of subsidy allocation. As noted earlier, big business in East Asia gets extensive government support (in the form of, say, cheap credit for targeted industries and incentives to R&D). In exchange for subsidies, the government holds big business accountable for achieving concrete, monitorable performance standards (with respect to, say, exports and worker training). The reciprocity principle is the linchpin of industrial policy in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan.

Starting in early U.S. history, there has been a deep antagonism to the state on the part of its privileged elite. The origins of hostility date to the Jeffersonian *vs*. Hamiltonian schism (the Jeffersonians representing rich southern planters and independent farmers and the Hamiltonians representing northern manufacturers). Initially this made it hard for Hamilton to introduce the first American industrial policy (his 1791 *Report on Manufactures*). At present it makes it hard even to move beyond macroeconomic "fine tuning" of the money supply and budget to some modest form of guided capitalism.

Although an agrarian elite is long gone, hostility to industrial policy in the United States continues to be born out of privilege and income inequality, and not just "interest groups." Opposition to government intervention is spearheaded by big business (witness, say, the antipathy toward industrial policy expressed at Bill Clinton's economic summit by John Young, chief of Hewlett-Packard). But why, one may ask, does even enlightened corporate America oppose a policy, which, after all, promises to give it government support?

In fact, the American government already provides copious support to business by various means—military expenditures in particular, tax breaks and other privileges at the state and local level, import protection for industries such as automobiles, steel, machine tools, and so forth. It also disciplines business in the form of regulation—say, antitrust laws and environmental and safety controls. What the government doesn't do is to combine the two interventions developmentally, the way governments do in East Asia. For example, the Taiwanese machine-tool industry has received government support to buy ailing American machine tool companies as a way to upgrade its technology. In exchange, the industry has agreed to invest a certain percentage of its sales in R&D and environmental protection. Meanwhile, the American machine-tool industry has been receiving tariff protection against imports of machine tools from Japan and Taiwan with no strings attached. During the Reagan-Bush era, government support of business increased and regulation decreased. Little wonder American business doesn't want an industrial policy.

To hold business to a higher standard, U.S. labor should demand that whatever government incentives business receives (and it is bound to receive more under the Clinton administration), nothing should be given away without a concrete, monitorable, development-oriented performance standard in exchange.

Permanent Employment

Traditionally, organized labor in the United States opposed involving itself in raising productivity, which it regarded as manage-

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ment's job (just as American radicals have tended to see industrial policy as an internecine battle within the establishment). Trade unions regarded their mission as one of demanding higher wages, which, they argued, would force management to raise productivity in self-defense. This strategy, however, has not worked in the last twenty years. Instead, American management has done everything possible to raise productivity *without* raising wages—largely by means of layoffs and harder/smarter work on the part of remaining workers—-and trade unionization has declined.

Not only has Japan managed to achieve much higher growth rates of productivity than the United States, it has done so under the constraint of a permanent employment system. Even in economic downturns and even during major restructuring, which followed the energy crises of the 1970s, leading Japanese companies have tended not to fire redundant workers. They transfer them to other subsidiaries or retrain them. If Japanese corporations can restructure without massive layoffs, why shouldn't American corporations be expected to do so?

Japan's permanent employment system covers only the labor aristocracy and has operated hand in hand with company unions. Nevertheless, in the current American context, demands for permanent employment in exchange for management's freedom to restructure are progressive.

Demanding that American corporations match the most progressive characteristics of East Asian late industrialization is a giant step away from denying that East Asia is even industrializing! But unless labor takes this step, it will remain as mired in trouble as many American industries. □

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REQUIEM FOR THE YUGOSLAV ECONOMY

The Politics of Economic Change

It is sometimes said that Yugoslavia disintegrated because of its economic failures. Those who know a bit more talk about the failure of self-management. Still others say that social property was responsible for the failures. Some economists admit that economic development occurred but maintain that this was because of foreign aid. None of these explanations is correct. The causes are political. I have elaborated a complete political economy of socialism elsewhere, and I will not repeat it here. By way of introduction, let me point to a few crucial economic facts.[1]

Before World War II, Yugoslavia was extremely underdeveloped. However, because of rapid development, by 1968 Yugoslavia had surpassed the prewar level of production and consumption of the most advanced European countries. From 1953 to 1965, the annual rate of productivity growth was 4.7 percent, as compared with that of European capitalist economies (3.3 percent) and statist economies (3 percent). Productivity growth was probably the highest in the world during that period. At the same time the relative indices of the basic welfare of the population (life expectancy at birth, education, and health services) were much higher than those of capitalist countries, but also substantially higher than those of welfare states. In fact, around 1971 they were the highest in the world.

Development

That said, we can proceed to a summary of development in somewhat more detail. In the thirty-five-year period from 1950 to 1985 the Yugoslav economy expanded at a relatively high rate. In fact, it was one among the six fastest growing economies in the world, as Table 1 indicates.

Eastern Germany had a per capita growth of 4.13 percent, but a growth of only 3.85 percent in total GNP because so many people left the country. For this reason it is not included among the top six. Korea, Brazil, and Malaysia started to grow faster a few years later, and their rates of growth were 5.15, 4.68, and 4.16 percent for the period 1953–85 (Korea) and 1955–85 (the other two countries).

As the fastest growing European economy, Yugoslavia was gradually overtaking other countries in a comparable group of South European countries. (See Table 2.)

At the beginning of the period, Yugoslavia shared the last place in Europe with Romania (Albanian data are not available). By 1980 it reached the average per capita GNP of the group of eight countries. Then the crisis set in, and the country began to fall behind in the rate of economic development.

A high rate of growth is not just a statistical artifact. It was reflected in the increasing economic welfare of the population. One item of consumption may highlight the results achieved. With its 2.9 million cars in 1986, Yugoslavia had twice as many cars as Turkey, which had twice the population of Yugoslavia.

High rates of growth caused radical social

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Table 1
Rate of Growth of Per Capita GNP (in percent)

	1950–1985		
Taiwan	6.64	Yugoslavia	4.46
Japan	6.26	Greece	4.41
China	5.10	Romania	4.04

changes. One example will suffice. Peasants made up 79 percent of total population in 1921 and decreased only about 12 percent in the next twenty prewar years. They were 67 percent in 1948 but fell to below 20 percent in 1981. Not only was there a drastic change of occupation, but there was also a mass exodus from the countryside to the cities. In 1948, only 21 percent of the population lived in cities. By 1981, this percentage increased to 47. In other words, almost 1 percent of total population—2 percent of the rural population—has been moving to cities every year. And about 3 percent of the rural population has been turning to various urban occupations. These changes have transformed an entire way of life.

The process of economic modernization seems to have been completed. I am not so sure about culture and political progress. It seems to be much easier to accumulate economic wealth than to change a political culture, tradition, and collective memory. General cultural conditions suddenly became a barrier to further development.

One more aspect of growth has to be explored. Yugoslavia was composed of eight federal units (six republics and two autonomous provinces) whose levels of development varied widely. Table 3 presents the essential data for the thirty-six-year period for which data are available.

Apart from Serbia and Croatia, the federal units were minuscule before 1952. Bosnia had fewer than three million inhabitants and the other units fewer than two million, that is, they were like the larger European cities, and their output was on the order of large Western companies. In four decades they grew and were more developed in terms of GNP per capita. The average rates of growth of 5.5 and 4.5 percent meant that GNP and GNP per capita expanded 4.5 and 3.3 times respectively. This economic transformation could not fail to have political consequences. They were expressed in violent assertions of national identity and an urge to become more independent politically.

Rates of growth of GNP among the regions were roughly equal, and they clustered around 5.5 percent per year in a comparably narrow interval. However, population growth was much faster—the percentage rate was more than double—in less developed regions, and that depressed their per capita growth in GNP. Of course, the less developed regions complained that they were being neglected. The government was aware of that, and all

Table 2
Gross National Product Per Capita of South-European Countries in International Dollar Prices of 1975

	1952	1964	1980	1988
Hungary	1717	2732	3861	4453
Spain	1400	2402	4179	4896
Bulgaria	1074	2083	3437	—
Greece	946	1842	3922	3953
Turkey	863	1151	2048	2594
Portugal	859	1400	3047	3542
Yugoslavia	769	1584	3318	3262
Romania	747*	1444	2766	—
Average for the group	1038	1830	3322	3800
Yugoslavia in percent of the average	74.1	86.6	100.0	85.8

* 1950

Sources: R. Summers, A. Weston, "Improved International Comparisons of Real Product and Its Composition," *Review of Income and Health*, 1984, pp. 207–62. For 1980–1988, *World Bank Atlas*.

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Table 3
The Development of the Yugoslav Federal Units 1952–1988

	Index of per capital GNP Yugoslavia = 100		Population rates of growth (in millions)			Rates of growth 1952–1988	
	1953	1988	1952	1988	1952–1988	GNP	GNP per capita
Developed regions							
Slovenia	161	200	1.49	1.95	0.75	5.7	4.9
Croatia	116	129	3.91	4.68	0.50	5.3	4.8
Vojvodina	100	118	1.70	2.05	0.52	6.0*	5.5*
Serbia (without provinces)	97	100	4.40	5.84	0.79	5.2	4.4
Less-developed regions							
Bosnia and Herzegovina	86	65	2.79	4.48	1.32	4.9	3.6
Montenegro	75	71	0.42	0.64	1.20	5.3	4.1
Macedonia	68	65	1.28	2.11	1.40	5.6	4.2
Kosovo	46	24	0.79	1.94	2.52	5.5	3.0
Yugoslavia	100	100	16.80	23.69	0.96	5.5	4.5

* The rates of growth are not fully comparable with the others because the base year was exceptionally low; 1952 was the worst postwar agricultural year; and in Vojvodina agriculture was particularly important.
Source: *SGJ*—1981 and 1989, 1972 prices.

development plans proposed speeding the growth of underdeveloped regions, particularly of Kosovo, which was singled out for special treatment. Something less than 2 percent of GNP was transferred yearly for that purpose from developed to undeveloped parts of the country (leading to a reverse complaint that the less developed regions were an economic burden and that they used transferred capital inefficiently—and so they did). Nevertheless, the spread between most developed Slovenia and least developed Kosovo increased from 3.5:1 to 8.3:1 in terms of GNP per capita. It is also apparent that *all* developed regions increased their relative standing (particularly Slovenia) and *all* less-developed regions decreased them (particularly Bosnia and Kosovo).[2]

New Economic Considerations

Economics is not the proper discipline to explain Yugoslav events. A sort of collective *thanatos* is at work: an urge to self-destruction accompanied by some sort of masochistic enjoyment. It is a rare phenomenon, and there exists no theory to explain it. Within the scope of this essay, I will limit myself to a few general remarks.

Prewar Yugoslavia, like czarist Russia, was a backward country. As the gap between Yugoslavia and developed countries widened, the brutality of its social relations became greater. If only in popular imagination, social differences became more noticeable. Development was slow, the regimes were repressive. It seemed that the only way to get out of the vicious cycle of poverty and brutality was to engineer a violent social revolution. The revolution would be worth sacrifice and would catch the imagination of people if it meant something really new, not only slightly higher wages and slightly better politicians. The revolution should create a new society in which even the most underprivileged would be able to use democratic institutions, in which social justice would be guaranteed, and in which the standard of living would increase rapidly. That meant socialism.

The opportunity arose during the war, and at great personal sacrifice, communists emerged victorious, and started to implement their vision. At that time they were extremely popular. According to various estimates, they would then have gotten at least two-thirds of the vote in any free election.

Their vision contained two crucial contradictions and one crucially false assumption. Socialism meant a free society in which the

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repressive "state would wither away" and in which the freedom of everybody was a precondition for the freedom of all (*Communist Manifesto*). However, you could not expect uneducated and illiterate people to understand that properly or to behave appropriately. Besides, the former ruling class would fiercely oppose an egalitarian society.

On the other hand, communists were convinced that they knew the laws of history; after all, was not Marxism-Leninism a most scientific social theory as Marshal Tito so often asserted? (That, of course, was a false assumption, particularly as the interpretation of "the most scientific theory" depended on half-educated political leaders.) The natural conclusion was that you needed a strong political party (which is true) that knows the truth (which is false), which would destroy all obstacles, if necessary by force (which is in conflict with socialist democracy) in order to realize socialism (which invokes a clash between bad means and good ends). The system that resulted was a sort of enlightened populism, not socialism.

The society was not ripe for socialism. Socialism was an extremely powerful mobilizing idea, but it also bore the seeds of its own destruction. Ambitions widely outran the possibilities of the existing society. Historically speaking, the new regime reduced the lag in development between a backward country and a more developed environment. When this task was essentially completed, when the country was modernized, the regime became dysfunctional.

Specific social and political dynamics must be considered. While the commanding positions were still in the hands of those who had been partisans (that is, those who had made the revolution), and before they succumbed to old age, the partisan ethos was alive. Political democracy did not matter too much because partisans were disciplined, relatively honest, and highly critical of national chauvinism. With the passage of time, the privileges of power eroded the old virtues and the new men showed themselves to be pragmatic politicians eager to advance their careers, not imbued with any ideals. The self-correcting effects of a multiparty system were absent. Incompetent and irresponsible people remained in power if they were sufficiently adaptable and submissive. Public opposition was absent. The party, having a political monopoly, degenerated, as has happened to all one-party regimes in the world without exception, regardless of the social system.

With the collapse of a liberalizing reform around 1970, which proved to be the last progressive reform, the economic and social systems began to decay. Top politicians were mediocre men (or worse), lacking any vision or ability to act productively. They were unable and unwilling to act, much less to discuss the information and offer help. Or, perhaps, they failed to understand what was happening, surrounded as they were by apologetic and equally irresponsible officials on whose information they relied. They were suspicious and afraid of any initiative coming from outside their own closed circle. Any deviation from the prescribed course of action was immediately penalized. Political survival in and of itself became the supreme goal. In the end, they were powerless to do anything, except to quarrel among themselves; and, when the time came, they quietly surrendered power.

Millions of citizens watched the behavior of their top politicians on television. The economy suffered from continual disruptions, but no meaningful measures were taken. A huge commission of experts was convened to draft a stabilization program. (For political reasons, I was prevented from participating in that commission.) The text produced was not bad, but the program was never implemented. Stagnation, rising unemployment, falling living standards, and lack of perspective led to general frustration. Everybody wanted a change; whatever happened, it could not be worse. That, of course, was a false assumption.

When, finally, democracy became available, citizens were not prepared for it. And they became an easy prey for jingoist politicians. One type of collectivism, based on class, was simply replaced by the only one available, based on nation. The new parliaments and

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governments function like the old ones, that is, as in the one-party state. The opposition is hardly heard. Mass media are controlled, particularly television, over which the ruling party has a monopoly. Teaching is controlled. The university is controlled. Employment policy is controlled. Managerial appointments are controlled.

One gets a definite impression that there is substantially less freedom of discussion and parliamentary opposition than under the former regime. Although not universally true for all regions, it is generally true. The former regime inherited a critical attitude toward jingoism from partisan times. Now everything is being done to homogenize one's own nation and to demonize others. Since there is no democratic tradition of political negotiations, the outcome is a civil war.

The Growth of Conflict

It is a somewhat strange civil war. It is not just two sides fighting against each other. It is a fight among many groups with shifting coalitions. Since the ruling parties involved are national chauvinists, and therefore right wing, the conflict can hardly be described as ideological. In five of the six republics the presidents are former Communist party leaders. Political programs are different, but that is a result of other factors. It is only partly an ethnic conflict, because Serbs live peacefully with Muslims in Sarajevo and with Croats in Zagreb. There is a complete ethnic separation only between the Serb (partly Montenegran) and Albanian populations in Kosovo. But Albanians do not fight back with arms, although they are traditionally privately armed. If the war is prolonged for a few more months, Albanians will necessarily get involved, adding the element of an uprising by oppressed people fighting a colonial war. The war can also, perhaps primarily, be described as a war between states. The state of Serbia wants to conquer parts of the territory of Croatia, Bosnia, and, perhaps later, Macedonia, which used to be called Southern Serbia.

For this purpose the borders between the states, which in most cases are centuries old, are proclaimed "administrative borders" by the ruling Belgrade politicians. An additional element of confusion is added by the federal army, which wanted to save the country from falling apart. Contrary to its declared aims, the army gradually allied itself with those who are bombing and destroying villages and cities, killing the inhabitants of their own country. Conscripts from all the nationalities are deserting the army, expressing the genuine popular feeling about the war. The authorities dare not punish them (in Serbia and Montenegro) and are encouraging desertions (in other republics).

Civil rights groups appealed to international organizations asking that refusal to participate in civil war be treated as a fundamental human right. The army and the rebels in the seceding states (in Croatia and Slovenia) argue that they seceded from Yugoslavia by unilateral decision, hence they are unconstitutional and, therefore, must be crushed. The rebels add: if Croatia and now Bosnia could take unilateral decisions and secede from Yugoslavia, they (the rebels) are fully entitled to secede from Croatia and Bosnia and create their own autonomous states. That, of course, can be achieved only by armed uprising. Finally, there is a strong element of *hajdučija*, which mixes Robin Hood fantasy with ordinary brigandage, particularly among highlanders, either in their native regions or in the regions where they were colonized.

In the sixteenth century Montenegran (and Albanian) highlanders were plundering the caravans of Dubrovnik merchants. Today the army and irregular troops do the same in the Dubrovnik region, where there are otherwise no ethnic conflicts. In the terminology of the Balkan wars of 1912–1913, they are "liberating" Dubrovnik (and Vukovar and Pakrac and so on); that is, every act of aggression is called liberation. In a condition of complete control of the media by the governments, many people sincerely believe in their "liberation" mission. Other belligerent groups also engage in plundering, justifying their activities by the fact that this is the "enemy's property." That is an old Turkish and Balkan tradition: property belongs to the conqueror.

If three generations ago some member of a

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different group (ethnic, religious, national, whatever), said Croat or a Serb committed a crime against someone of your group, you were entitled to retaliate, although the individual in question may have been long dead. That psychological attitude, confusing individual and collective responsibility, is essentially the same as that underlying blood revenge among Albanians.

For all these reasons plundering, vandalism, and killing are not considered great crimes. One wonders how such brutal "folkways" could survive so far into modernity. As a great Montenegran, Marko Miljanov, described it a century ago, it is a sort of sporty attitude, an exhibition of courage. You have to dare, to have the guts to do it—similar to the way the Wild West was pictured in the past. One cannot but remark that communists must have accomplished an extraordinary feat in assuring peace and prosperity in such a country for half a century!

It is clear that economic rationality has no place in such a social context. The authorities do not care about economic priorities. We are prepared to eat grass, proclaimed a member of the Serbian government. Nor do the majority of citizens seem to have economic values on their list of priorities. Formerly people were frustrated. Now they are *ostrašćeni*, for which there is no English equivalent and means imbued with aggressive hate.

Could history have gone a different direction? People usually follow Hegel—unknowingly—and believe that it could not. At any rate, that is a treacherous hypothetical question. I have only a tentative answer.

With the benefit of hindsight, I would say, first of all, that two contradictions of Yugoslav politics had to be openly exposed and false assumptions corrected. Socialism is about freedom and is incompatible with repression. Means should be compatible with ends, and violent means cannot produce desirable ends. And, of course, no one has a scientific theory that guarantees absolute truth.

More specifically, the enormous popularity of partisans after the war should have been used to educate people in democratic literacy. (Was a formerly illegal party able to do that?) Such education involves not only the design of institutions but the education of free and independent people able to make their own decisions (but could that be achieved under collectivism?). Instead of trying to preserve its monopoly of power, the party should have been subject to public restraint in free elections and retained its power only through competent and honest rule. The Swedish Social Democratic party performed exactly that feat; having saved Swedish society from the worst consequences of the world depression in the early 1930s, it remained in power for half a century.

Mass media and education should have been free (as opposed to enforcing "correct" views). Workers' management was a positive innovation, but its role was not properly understood. It should have supplemented political democracy in order to achieve the radical democracy essential for socialism. Political democracy can exist without economic democracy. Economic democracy cannot exist without political democracy. Yugoslavia reversed the historical sequence, failed to develop political democracy, and ruined economic democracy as a consequence.

Robert Dahl[3] points out that today's mature democracies were preceded by protodemocratic developments over a century or more. In Croatia and Slovenia protodemocratic evolution started after 1860, after the fall of Bach absolutism in the Austrian empire; in Serbia it occurred a generation later, after 1878, when Serbia achieved full independence from Turkish rule. Dahl then proceeds to note that the mature democratic countries achieved a substantial degree of national unity and a sense of nationhood before the twentieth century.

National independence seems also to have played an important role. Now, it is only Montenegro and Serbia that qualify fully. Croatia and Slovenia are old nations, but they regained their national independence only in 1918. Macedonians, Bosnians, and Albanians developed a full sense of nationhood and won independence in a federal state only after the national war of liberation, 1941–1945, in which they actively participated. The lengthy

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process of predemocratic development lasts for many generations and is followed by a gradual inauguration of democratic institutions "accompanied by a deepening of the country's democratic culture, beliefs, habits, practices, folkways, customs."

Democratic countries were *relatively* rich; that is, all of them were in the forefront of economic development. The latecomers apparently had to be *absolutely* rich, which means that they had to achieve a standard of living higher than that of the pioneers, incorporating a relatively equitable distribution of income. Finally, democracies seem to become stable after a generation of creating a full set of democratic institutions. (There are five of them, according to Dahl: popular election of the government, free and fair elections, protected freedom of expression, an effective right to form independent organizations, and access to alternative sources of information not under the control of the state.)

Partisan revolutionaries were unaware of the formidable tasks before them; they would not even have considered them necessary. With the benefit of hindsight, we now see that they had to complete protodemocratic development, gradually nurture democratic institutions, and see to it that these survived for at least a generation. They accomplished some of these tasks. But were they able to accomplish everything—even if they wished to do so? Full democracy is surely not established in the former Yugoslav countries now.

Let me add two additional conditions. Genuine national and regional aspirations, characteristic of the present time, should have been taken fully into account (instead of being confused with chauvinism and jingoism).

Finally, Tito was an excellent political leader until about the 1960s. In fact, he is considered one of the great world leaders of our time. But physiology takes its toll. He should have retired in time, replaced by an able, younger person. George Washington did so two centuries ago, as did Julius Nyerere in our day. Communist leaders do not do that.

The requirements for success are, no doubt, formidable. Nor are all of them listed. However, although necessary, they are not sufficient. What would have been the probability of achieving them? Your guess is as good as mine. Only one thing is certain: it is necessary to start from a new beginning. In the meantime, the society we have been discussing had to pay an exorbitant price for what it has experienced. □

Notes

[1] For more information, see Branko Horvat, ed., *Uzroci i karakteristike privrednih kretanja u 1961. i 1962. godini*, Belgrade: Savplan, DAMZ, 1962; *Business Cycles in Yugoslavia*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1971; *The Yugoslav Economic System, The First Labour Managed Economy in the Making*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1976; *The Political Economy of Socialism*, New York: M.E. Sharpe & Oxford: M. Robertson, 1982; "Planning in Yugoslavia," in M. Faber, D. Seers, ed., *The Crisis in Planning*, London: Sussex Univ. Press, 1972; and B. Balassa and T. Bertrand, "Growth Performance in Eastern European Economies and Comparable Western European Countries," *American Economic Review*, May 1970, p. 316.

[2] Miroslava Momirski-Marjanovic, *Brzi razvoj nerazvijenih podrucja kao preduvjet za ubrzavanje rasta razvijenih* (Zagreb: Faculty of Economics, unpublished doctoral dissertation), 1991.

[3] Robert Dahl, "Transitions to Democracy," in G. Szoboszlai, ed., *Democracy and Political Transformation* (Budapest: Hungarian Political Science Association), 1991.

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Irving Howe

IN HONOR OF MIKE

Thirty Years After *The Other America*

Michael Harrington's path-breaking book *The Other America* was published about thirty years ago. It is now being reprinted in paperback by Colliers. The following essay was written as an introduction to this reprint, describing some of the circumstances of publication and discussing briefly some of the problems raised in the book.—EDS.

When Michael Harrington's *The Other America* began to win a large audience after its publication in 1962, both he and his friends were very much surprised. I remember thinking that Mike's book, fine as it was, would probably be numbered among those "worthy" publications that sell four or five thousand copies and then fade away. Such had been the fate of many serious books in earlier years, and such would be the fate of many serious books in later years. But when Mike's book "took off," it seemed a modest signal that fundamental changes were starting to occur in this country. We now began to think that the years of conservative doldrums in which the cold war had dominated political life were coming to an end.

The conservative mood—it would reappear in the 1980s—had found its first major postwar expression in the 1950s. Many Americans then began to assume that the cyclical recessions characteristic of capitalist economies had been eradicated or at least suppressed in the United States, and that the economic crises and social inequities that had prevailed before the Second World War and that Franklin Roosevelt's reforms had by no means eliminated were now becoming things of the past. Actually, we were living off the benefits of a postwar boom, and, partly in consequence, a mood of self-congratulation swept the country. This was especially noticeable among intellectuals, some of them ex-radicals who would soon transform themselves into "new conservatives." Attitudes of social complacency would dominate the years of Dwight Eisenhower's presidency, spreading even to segments of the liberal community. It now seems a little comic to recall that leading liberal intellectuals wrote solemn essays taking for granted that we had solved our social problems and therefore could turn to themes of a "higher," more spiritual nature. The intellectuals, in short, grew enamored, as they often do, of the *Zeitgeist*, that most treacherous of deceptions. Mary McCarthy, for example, could write something so absurd as this: "Class barriers disappear or tend to become porous: the factory worker is an economic aristocrat in comparison to the middle-class clerk. . . . The America . . . of vast inequalities and dramatic contrasts is rapidly ceasing to exist."

Only a handful of intellectuals—a few liberals, a few radicals, some of them huddling around the newly created magazine *Dissent*—kept up stringent criticism of American society. Michael Harrington, still very young, was one of these, joining in our polemics against the dominant trend; polemics, I must admit, that were little heeded.

One of the things that helped change the mood of the country was the daring of the "Freedom Riders," a group of black and white young people who traveled to the South in

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order to help blacks assert their right to vote. President Kennedy's youthful earnestness and charm promised an America more sensitive to the many social problems that were festering just beneath the surface of social life. And Mike's book helped too.

In his autobiographical *Fragments of the Century* Mike wrote about the sudden rise to fame and success that *The Other America* brought him. He had published an article, "Our Fifty Million Poor," in *Commentary* magazine—then quite different from the rigidly conservative *Commentary* of today—and this article, he said, caused "a small stir." Then the Macmillan Publishing Company offered Mike a $500 advance (not bad for a young writer in those days) so that he could enlarge the article into a book. In its first several months after publication, *The Other America* did fairly well, earning Mike royalties of about $1,500, enough for a trip to Paris. And then, as Mike was browsing one day in a Paris bookshop, he noticed a lengthy and absolutely first-rate essay-review by Dwight Macdonald in the *New Yorker* dealing with American poverty in general and Mike's book in particular. Macdonald had been a comrade of Mike's and mine in a small socialist group some years earlier but had since gone his own way politically. Still, we remained friends, and, unlike many other intellectuals of those days, he retained a strong capacity for moral response—which most of the time means moral indignation. Macdonald was also a brilliant journalist—lucid, witty, sharp. His essay-review, almost a small book in its own right, "made poverty a topic of conversation," wrote Mike, "in the intellectual-political world of the Northeast." Mike continues: "Then John Kennedy, who had been deeply moved by the suffering he had seen in West Virginia during the 1960 primary, asked Walter Heller, the chairman of his Council of Economic Advisors, if there were anything to these new theories about poverty. Heller told him that there was and gave him a copy of [Mike's] book. . . . Shortly thereafter Kennedy decided to make the abolition of poverty a major domestic goal." So books can sometimes (not very often) change the course of things.

In his autobiography Mike confesses that he worried about the fact that nowhere in *The Other America* did he openly declare his socialist convictions—his belief that it would take governmental planning and social investments to deal with poverty "even in a reformist way." He need not have worried. There are social and economic problems regarding which liberals and socialists can work together in harmony, enacting reforms that decent men and women can endorse. In any case, Mike, in his numerous speeches and articles, was making it perfectly clear what his political opinions were. I doubt that many readers of *The Other America* didn't know.

Reading *The Other America* again after a lapse of some thirty years, I have been impressed by how well the book has stood the test of time. Of course, some of the facts are by now dated, and one of Dwight Macdonald's criticisms—that Mike should have included reference notes—is to the point. More problematic, though a matter of great importance, is the central premise out of which Mike wrote: that if only people *knew* the reality they would respond with indignation, that if only people became aware of "the invisible poor," they would act to eliminate this national scandal. Alas, we have seen in the intervening years that people can indeed "know" and yet remain passive, in fact that some know and can even become calloused. All of us who live in big cities share the experience of having learned to walk past the homeless as if their being on the streets were some sort of natural event—maybe we dig up a few coins, maybe we don't, but the indignation we may have felt upon first noticing the homeless gradually wears off. I suppose Mike came to recognize this with the passage of the years, but I think that somehow he could not quite bring himself to acknowledge it. Some remnant of his earlier Christian belief, some part of the ethic he had learned from the Catholic Worker movement, led him to feel that sooner or later human beings will respond to a moral appeal. I can almost hear him saying, "They must!"

The youthful purity of feeling, the sweetness

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of temper that marked Mike's words and acts seem to me as touching, now that I turn back to his book, as they did thirty years ago. Even after becoming a socialist leader without very many followers, Mike never spoke with the dryness of soul one finds in many a professional politician, including some on the left. One felt about him that the compassion of his books came out of the very depths of his being.

The prose of *The Other America* is clean and lucid. Mike structured his book as a sequence of vignettes—poverty here, poverty there, with appended sketches of the moral and psychological costs, and just enough of a sprinkling of statistics to back up his case.

One of the first questions he had to confront is by no means as simple as it may seem: What is poverty? He defined it as a historically relative concept, clearly different in a rich country like the United States from what it would be in a stricken country:

> There are new definitions [in America] of what man can achieve, of what a human standard of life should be. Those who suffer levels of life well below those that are possible, even though they live better than medieval knights or Asian peasants, are poor. . . . Poverty should be defined in terms of those who are denied the minimal levels of health, housing, food and education that *our present stage of scientific knowledge specifies as necessary for life as it is now lived in the United States*. (Emphasis added)

At the time Mike wrote, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that $4,000 a year for a family of four and $2,000 a year for an individual living alone constituted the dividing line between modest well-being and poverty. According to Mike's estimates, this meant that between forty and fifty million Americans, or about one-fourth of the population, were living in poverty. This came as a shock to many people, and they refused to believe it: they thought Mike was exaggerating. But he was merely following official statistics, and everything that would later happen in this country suggests that he was essentially right. People had only to remember Franklin Roosevelt's famous phrase—one third of the nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished. In the 1930s, during the depth of the depression, we were better prepared to acknowledge such dismal facts than we were in the 1960s, a time of widespread social delusion.

One of the most interesting, if debatable, points in *The Other America* was Mike's insistence that poverty is not just one social attribute among others: it is an encompassing condition. Experienced for any length of time, poverty made people feel "hopeless and passive, yet prone to bursts of violence: the poor are lonely and isolated, often rigid and hostile. To be poor is not simply to be deprived of the material things of this world. It is to enter a fatal, futile universe, an America within America, with a twisted spirit." At another point in his book Mike offered a still more vivid description of the extreme states to which poverty could drive people:

> The other America is becoming increasingly populated by those who do not belong to anyone or anything. They are no longer participants in an ethnic culture from the old country; they are less and less religious; they do not belong to unions or clubs. They are not seen, and because of that they themselves cannot see. Their horizon has become more and more restricted; they see one another, and that means they see little reason to hope.

I suspect that Mike may have been offering an overdrawn description, that he was claiming too tight a connection between material condition and spiritual-emotional consequences. What he wanted, however, was to shock the country. He wanted to show that there was a vast difference between, say, the poverty of earlier immigrant generations, which could hope that hard work and frugal living would enable them to improve their lot, and the poverty of the kinds of people he was describing—the blacks driven off southern plantations, the folks rotting in Appalachia, the slum dwellers who see no escape. When poverty was a condition spread through much of the population, its effects seemed not as damaging socially and psychologically as when it became concentrated in a large minority of Americans.

By the 1960s, wrote Mike, poverty had become "invisible":

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> The poor are increasingly slipping out of the very experience and consciousness of the nation. If the middle class never did like ugliness and poverty, it was at least aware of them. "Across the tracks" was not a very long way to go. . . . Now the American city has been transformed. The poor still inhabit the miserable housing in the central area, but they are increasingly isolated from contact with, or sight of, anybody else.

Finally Mike's book was a *cri de coeur*, an appeal to the conscience of the country: How can you allow such a scandal to fester in this country?

I wish I knew the answer to that question, since it would tell us a great deal, not necessarily pleasant, about the moral and psychological composition of the American people. True, during the 1960s, as a result of the once-famous "War Against Poverty," there was a significant reduction in the number of poor Americans, but the trend became reversed in the 1970s and 1980s. Now, some thirty years since Mike's book came out, there have been thousands of articles and speeches, scores of books depicting and analyzing poverty. Everyone has had a say, yet poverty remains. This is not the result of some decree of nature, as certain benighted souls maintain, nor is it a result of the "laziness" of the poor, as some cabdrivers and right-wing ideologues will tell you. It is due to social neglect and cynicism. It is due to a failure of political will.

In these thirty years there have of course been changes with regard to the American poor. And while I do not write as an expert on poverty, let me try very briefly to list some of the new factors.

There has been one distinct improvement, and that is in the condition of the elderly. Partly because they have become a politically potent segment of the population that has learned how to organize and exert pressure in behalf of its needs and partly because programs like Social Security and Medicare have helped a good deal, poverty among the elderly has decreased significantly in the last thirty years. However, at the time of writing this, I would note the danger that is posed to the elderly by the increasing number of corporations and companies that are forfeiting on their promise to provide health insurance for retirees.

There have been a number of negative developments. The rise of the single-parent family has led to increased poverty among both adults and children. Indeed, one of the most terrible developments has been the large increase of poverty among children. Another factor in the increase of poverty has been the use of illegal drugs among some of the poor, especially black youth—it is hard to say whether poverty leads to illegal drug use or drug use to poverty; probably the two combine to make a vicious circle. Still another reason for the rise in poverty has been the decline in government assistance programs for the poor and unemployed. Perhaps the most important factor in the increase of poverty during the 1980s has been the steady decline in wage levels, so that we now have in America a group that is called the working poor—people who do have jobs, who work hard, who try desperately to stay afloat as providers of families (sometimes men, sometimes women) but who earn such wretchedly low wages that they sink below the poverty line. Some of these developments Mike anticipated; others he could not have foreseen.

Let me quote from two authoritative studies about recent American poverty. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, headed by Robert Greenstein, reports:

> In 1991 the number of poor Americans hit its highest level in more than 20 years, as 2.1 million more Americans fell into poverty . . . .
>
> The increase in poverty was particularly sharp among children. . . . Some 900,000 additional children became poor [in 1991] as the child poverty rate rose from 20.6 percent in 1990 to 21.8 percent in 1991. Some 14.3 million were poor last year. Like the overall number of poor people, the number of poor children was greater than in any other year.
>
> A Census report issued in May 1992 showed that the proportion of full-time year-round workers who are paid wages too low to lift a family of four out of poverty has grown sharply in recent years. In 1979, some 12.1 percent of full-time year-round workers were paid wages this low. In 1990, some 18 percent were.

And the Economic Policy Institute, in a richly

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detailed study, *The State of Working America* by Larry Mishel and Jared Bernstein, reports:

> Despite the growing economy between 1983 and 1989, poverty rates were high by historic standards. In fact, those in poverty in 1989 were significantly poorer than the poor in 1979. For example, 8% more poor persons had incomes at 50% of the poverty line in 1989 than in 1979. . . .
>
> The poverty rates of blacks have been at least three times that of whites since 1979, reaching 32.7% in 1991. The Hispanic rate has climbed from 21.9% in 1973 to 28.7% in 1991.
>
> The reason poverty rates remained high despite the [economic] recovery has to do with wage decline and the failure of the "safety net," i.e., the government system of taxes and transfers designed to ameliorate poverty. Over the 1980s, the already-low wages of low-income workers fell 15.9% for male and 6.9% for female workers in the bottom 20% of the earnings' distribution.

Enough of statistics. The fact is that poverty remains a major blight on the American scene. That it persists over the years makes it worse, since many people sink more deeply into what has been called "the culture of poverty," losing all hope and sometimes even giving up the search for jobs. And the scandal is heightened when we remember that in the Reagan-Bush years there was an orgy of financial speculation, often resulting in tremendous increases of wealth among the already wealthy, as well as to an increasing polarization between the rich and all others in the American population.

The scandal remains, and that makes *The Other America* a book as significant today as it was on the day of its publication. I only wish Mike were still here among us, to cry out at the shame of a nation. □

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Peter Dailey

WHO WAS MALCOLM X?

Untangling Reality and Myth

Few things are less predictable than the vagaries of reputation. The role of Malcolm X in the racial dramas of the sixties was comparatively minor and his influence while alive, negligible. To have suggested in 1964 that within ten years Lenox Avenue, where his street-corner audiences had regularly clashed with the police, would be renamed Malcolm X Boulevard, his autobiography incorporated into high school curricula, and Malcolm himself enshrined in the pantheon of twentieth-century African-American heroes would have seemed absurd. Yet this hardly begins to do justice to the extent of his posthumous fame. The canonization of Malcolm X was abetted by virtually every segment of black political opinion, from campus radicals to more cautious officeholders. It represents a curious acknowledgment of the force, if not the persuasiveness, of his legacy, and says as much about the failure of black nationalism to achieve tangible results in the seventies and eighties as it does about Malcolm himself.

Malcolm had emerged in the late fifties as the most vocal spokesman of the Nation of Islam, a radically separatist, inward-looking, uncompromisingly anti-white sect, whose puritanical tenets were expressions of a fundamentally millenarian outlook—the new dispensation they awaited would be brought about not by human agency but by divine operation. Their worldview and the severity of the life their adherents, in particular women, were required to lead, ensured that although Malcolm, as poet Sonia Sanchez notes, was "saying out loud what African-Americans had been saying all along behind closed doors," his impact on the larger black community would be limited.

His break with Elijah Muhammad in 1963 freed Malcolm from the Nation's organizational and doctrinal constraints. He made no secret of his ambition to fashion a new political identity for himself and to appeal to a broader constituency. He now wanted to work with the leaders of the major civil rights organizations in a "common approach," undoubtedly ignorant of the movement's organizational dynamics, for the SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference), NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), and Urban League were less a coalition than competing factions whose leaders were barely on speaking terms.

These ambitions went almost wholly unrealized. Part of Malcolm's tragedy, if one regards it as that, is that there was no Aaron to his Moses. While the men with whom Malcolm surrounded himself had been invaluable in building the Nation of Islam, they were not skilled political operatives. Conspicuous for their resoluteness and personal loyalty, not afraid to resort to strong-arm tactics, they were a not wholly unfamiliar combination of idealist and small-time racketeer, the sort of men that a generation earlier had gravitated to Sufi Abdul Hamid and thirty years later would be found with Rev. Al Sharpton and Sonny Carson. In awe of Malcolm as a daring conceptual thinker—a homily of Malcolm's that condemned the eating of pork had for one of them precipitated a severe religious crisis—they were unable to create a new broad-based movement.

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Malcolm himself was almost completely lacking in organizational ability, and the Organization of Afro-American Unity never really got off the ground. At the time of his death, his Moslem Mosque, which even on a good night seldom drew more than twenty-five people, was in the process of being evicted from its 116th Street storefront. Elijah Muhammad derided him as a "General without an army."

Malcolm was paying the price for his early notoriety. Despite his efforts to make himself more palatable to the civil rights establishment, even the movement's most militant wing regarded him with suspicion. Moreover, he was unable to halt his increasing marginalization and complained, on more than one occasion, of being boxed into an ideological corner. He could remain in the public eye and maintain his hold on his followers only by taking extreme positions that further isolated him from the mainstream. When the *New York Times*, in a July, 1964 poll, asked "New York Negroes" who was "doing the best" for them, 73 percent named Martin Luther King, Jr., 22 percent Roy Wilkins, and 6 percent Malcolm X. As Tom Kahn and Bayard Rustin noted after Malcolm's assassination, "Having blown the trumpet, he could summon, even at the very end, only a handful of followers."

In later years, speculation was widespread that his murder had been part of a CIA-directed conspiracy to eliminate a dangerous threat to the racial status quo (a fantasy elaborated most recently in the Spike Lee film). In fact, although the guilt of several of those convicted is apparently still at issue, there was never any doubt on whose behalf the gunmen had acted.

To read Peter Goldman's excellent *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* (1973) is to be struck again by the pathos of Malcolm's last months. Hunted by prison-seasoned cadres of the Fruit of Islam, he seemed overwhelmed by the despairing recognition that he was helpless to protect himself. Ironically, although advocacy of self-defense had been his most controversial teaching, for Malcolm himself it had remained entirely theoretical. Even after his house was firebombed, he seems to have understood that arming his followers would have provoked their slaughter.

For most of his last year, Malcolm was able to stay alive solely by remaining out of the country. The most visible apostate from the Nation of Islam, he was taunted by his former associate Louis Farrakhan, who described him as a "cowardly hypocritical dog . . . worthy of death" and dared him to come back and "face the music." Charles 37X Kenyatta, Malcolm's closest assistant, is convinced that Malcolm was never reconciled to his separation from the Nation and that even "ten or fifteen minutes before he was assassinated, if Elijah Muhammad had asked him to come back, he would have come back."

As it was, when Malcolm walked onto the stage of the Audubon Ballroom on that February afternoon in 1965, confronting the danger that, Robert Penn Warren noted, he had "more shrewdly estimated than anyone else," it was with "nerve, confidence, style." Whatever ambitions he may have harbored, personal enrichment had not been one of them: his pregnant widow and four small daughters were left without enough money to pay his funeral expenses. His movement died with him. In a last futile, retaliatory gesture several nights later, a group of unknown followers succeeded in setting the Nation of Islam's Lenox Avenue mosque on fire.

The degree to which Malcolm failed to alter his reputation as an anti-white extremist is apparent from the obituaries in the national press. The *New York Times* described him as an "extraordinary and twisted man" who had put "true gifts to evil purpose." For *Time* magazine he was "an unashamed demagogue" whose "gospel was Hatred" and who "in life and in death was a disaster to the civil rights movement." Even the *Nation* dismissed him as "the highly intelligent, courageous leader of one segment of the Negro lunatic fringe." This judgment was largely shared by the civil rights community. One NAACP official labeled him "the best thing that happened to the KKK since the invention of the bedsheet." Others were more perceptive. Kahn and Rustin noted that "his voice and words were cathartic," with

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"skill and feeling he articulated angry subterranean moods more widespread than any of us like to admit."

His uncompromising vision on occasion made him a powerful critic not only of white America but of the black integrationist leadership, whose insistence on the efficacy of nonviolence and the redemptive power of Christian love had been increasingly discredited. Even those who saw him as an rabble-rouser acknowledged that he was a man of unusual ability. Malcolm possessed an incisive intelligence that seldom revealed the gaps in his eight-grade and prison education, the deficiencies of which he was acutely conscious. He once confided to Alex Haley: "Man, lots of times I just wish I could start back in school, from about the Sixth Grade. Man, I'd be the last one out of that library every night!"

Above all, he was a superb orator and debater. Modeling his delivery on the televised sermons of Billy Graham, Malcolm developed his skills in thousands of incendiary speeches on street corners and at mosques. James Baldwin, recalling one of these performances, recognized that "nothing could have been less reckless, more calculated, even to those loopholes he so often left dangling. These were not loopholes at all, but hangman's knots, as whoever rushed for the loophole immediately discovered." As his opponent equivocated and backtracked, Haley noted, Malcolm would sit and listen with a foxlike grin. Nor was his appeal limited to black audiences. Next to Barry Goldwater he was the most sought-after speaker on the college circuit. At the conclusion of his appearance before the Oxford Union he received a standing ovation.

White reporters assigned to cover him acknowledged that although being the sole white face at his rallies was not always a comfortable experience, in his personal dealings Malcolm was unfailingly cordial, with a modesty that almost everyone found engaging. People who knew him best, however, described him as quick tempered and suspicious, with a personal reserve few were able to overcome.

Despite Malcolm's undeniable talents, had he lived, novelist David Bradley persuasively suggests in a recent issue of *Transition*, the avenues to legitimate power would have remained closed to him, and "in all probability he would have gone gentle into the good night of the seventies." His death rescued him from his own inconsequentiality. With the collapse of the civil rights movement, the disaffection in the urban north that Malcolm had expressed became increasingly widespread. The symbol of an ill-defined alternative, in the face of what Baldwin called the "bitter, unanswerable present," Malcolm's words took on a new resonance.

The transformation of popular attitudes toward Malcolm was remarkable. Baldwin, who had harshly criticized the Muslims for battening on the despair of black people, and who, shortly before Malcolm was murdered, had told an interviewer, "I would never have sent any child of mine to school to Malcolm, and I would—for myself—rather die than become that kind of theologian," five years later proclaimed that "in some church someday, so far unimagined and unimaginable, he will be hailed as a saint."

Crucial to the creation of Malcolm's posthumous reputation was the appearance, six months after his death, of Alex Haley's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, a book that Malcolm had said he would not live to see published. This vivid narrative was fashioned from approximately fifty interviews that Malcolm had taped during his last year. It traces the stages of his life story: his boyhood in impoverished circumstances, early criminal career and prison conversion to the Nation of Islam, gradual absorption in the political struggles of black people, break with the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, embrace of orthodox Islam, and tentative acceptance of a more sophisticated, liberal, and humane outlook.

Each stage involved a repudiation of what had gone before it. Malcolm found in Harlem and Roxbury, Massachusetts—both still energetic black communities—an identity denied him by the predominantly white environment in which he was raised. And while the chapters

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recounting his career as the zoot-suited, fast talking, lindy-hopping, reefer-smoking Detroit Red are among the most engaging, the austere Minister Malcolm, looking back, saw only vanity and empty striving.

Similarly, although he had often claimed that everything he had accomplished in life he owed to Elijah Muhammad, he later emphasized that his pilgrimage to Mecca, where he had worshipped with Moslems of different races, had enabled him to appreciate for the first time the true universalist spirit of Islam. As a result he had returned a changed person, both more worldly and with a more profound understanding of society and human nature. The portrait that emerges is of someone who had put behind him the racism of the Nation of Islam (an event movingly portrayed in Spike Lee's film); an enigmatic, in a sense unfinished, character; a man for whom anything was possible.

For a generation of black writers, students, and activists, reading the *Autobiography* was a transforming experience. For bell hooks it "revolutionized my thinking about race and politics"; for Thulani Davis it "opened my mind, moved it away from provincial, frightened thinking." People as varied as Eldridge Cleaver and Clarence Thomas described it as a decisive influence.

Nietzsche argued that after death men are understood worse than men of the moment, but *heard* better. With the resurgence of interest in Malcolm, his speeches and writings received the sort of respectful attention they had never had before. "By any means necessary!" and other slogans extolling black pride and assertiveness took on an emblematic clarity. Attempts by scholars to reconstruct a coherent philosophy from his hundreds of speeches, however, were largely unsuccessful; his words were often contradictory, reflecting the expectations of his audiences, which were as varied as the Socialist Workers party, the Harvard Law School, and street-corner meetings on 125th Street.

One writer has described his speeches as a "loosely strung set of positions that were changing even as he announced them." Malcolm himself acknowledged to a reporter that "I'm man enough to tell you that I can't put my finger on exactly what my philosophy is now." Paradoxically, these very ambiguities ultimately enhanced his influence. C. Eric Lincoln noted that the "projections of what he was about to do range from a seat on the board of the Urban League to a Castro-type armed revolution."

That Haley's account was at variance with the more pedestrian actuality of Malcolm's life has long been suspected by literary scholars, who recognized in Malcolm's narrative a kinship to hortatory works ranging from the *Confessions of St. Augustine* to *Up from Slavery*. The full extent of the omissions and distortions that gave it shape was not known, however, until the publication in 1991 of Bruce Perry's *Malcolm, The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America* (Station Hill Press). Although marred by reductive psychoanalyzing and deficient in other respects, Perry's book represented an impressive piece of research. Malcolm was only thirty-nine when he was murdered, and was survived by his wife, mother and numerous siblings, friends, and associates who had witnessed the events described in the *Autobiography*. In all Perry interviewed over four hundred people, conducting, in addition, a similarly exhaustive search of police, prison, court, and F.B.I. records. In the twenty-five years since Malcolm's apotheosis these sources had gone largely unconsulted, a curious circumstance given the intensity of interest about him.

The book that resulted contains a number of revelations. One of the framing devices of the *Autobiography* is a series of dramatic confrontations with racism. Malcolm relates how his parents were driven from their home in Nebraska by hooded night riders; persecution follows them and when Malcolm is an adolescent, their house near Lansing, Michigan, is burned down by the Black Legion, a KKK-type organization. The book states that Malcolm's Garveyite father was ultimately murdered by whites, who threw his body on the street-car tracks to make his death appear accidental. In addition, he accounts for what he apparently felt was the incongruity of advocat-

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ing black pride while possessing a light skin color by explaining that his West Indian grandmother had been raped by a white man. Perry convincingly demonstrates that these events either did not occur or were fundamentally misrepresented.

Malcolm's descriptions of his life in the Roxbury and Harlem ghettos are similarly exaggerated. The teenaged Malcolm of the *Autobiography* is a young lion, subjugating anyone and everything to his will, but saved ultimately from a life of degradation by his prison conversion to the Nation of Islam. Like much else in the book, this is a romance. The poverty he experienced was a good deal more demoralizing and the remedies to which he resorted more desperate than his account would indicate. What is indisputable is that his early life in a depression-era welfare family was profoundly shaped by racism. Nor was the process by which he remade himself any less remarkable. The story, however, of how this was accomplished would have required someone with considerably more self-knowledge than Malcolm to tell it.

David Bradley correctly notes that we are left with "a subtly altered figure—more intriguing, more intelligent, certainly more human." Especially provocative is the disclosure that as a young man one of the expedients to which Malcolm turned was homosexual prostitution. Unfortunately, Bradley acknowledges, as the facts are more generally known, subtlety is likely to be the first casualty.

Although these discoveries have been widely publicized, less remarked upon are those concerning Malcolm's central epiphany during the Hajj to Mecca, which Perry scrutinized skeptically, ultimately casting considerable doubt on its genuineness. In 1959 Malcolm had traveled extensively in the Middle East and experienced many of the same things he later claimed struck him with the force of revelation. Noting the methodical way Malcolm undertook to publicize this change of heart, writing scores of postcards to newsmen, and giving his puzzled subordinates elaborate instructions about how he wanted the press handled, Perry argues convincingly that his pilgrimage provided the pretext for abandoning a racial ideology that for some time had been politically burdensome.

His private feelings about whites were undoubtedly more complicated than his rhetoric as a minister for the Nation would suggest. Accounts that treat Malcolm as a product of the northern ghetto ignore the extent to which his early life in largely rural communities had been intertwined with the lives of white people. Although this experience could not have been other than deeply embittering, his white schoolmates had been sufficiently aware of the young Malcolm's exceptional qualities to elect him class president, and he apparently had had an affectionate relationship with a white foster family. This familiarity may explain the comparative equanimity with which, even during his days as a Muslim firebrand, his personal dealings with the white devil were conducted.

Of more significance than his private racial beliefs is the extent to which he had succeeded in renouncing racist political appeals. Peter Goldman believed that at his death Malcolm was as convinced as ever that all white people were the enemies of all black people. David Bradley argues that "he did not give up hating or his accusations of racism. He simply learned to hate institutions."

It would be wrong, of course, to describe such beliefs as racist, although when translated into street-corner oratory, the distinction can seem elusive. Nevertheless, a number of troubling episodes are difficult to reconcile with the larger and more humane vision his admirers later ascribed to him. Particularly disturbing were statements he made just weeks after his return from Mecca that appear to countenance an attack by a gang of black teenagers during the course of a robbery of a white-owned Harlem clothing store, in which the shopkeeper's wife was stabbed. James Farmer, who asked Malcolm why his new outlook was not reflected in the speeches he gave every Saturday at Harlem Square, was told: "Brother James, you must be enough of a politician to understand that if a leader makes a sudden right angle turn, he turns alone." About the only

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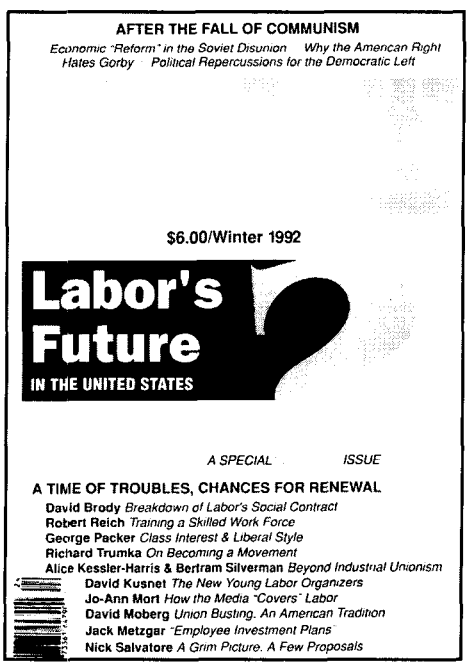
thing that can be said with any degree of certainty is that, as Kahn and Rustin noted, "his hostility to whites was becoming less absolute."

Does the truth about Malcolm in fact matter? For those to whom Malcolm is less a historical figure than a mythic presence, it has become irrelevant. Ron Simmons, in an interview in *Malcolm X: In Our Own Image* argues that "many a people have been united and have grown strong on premises that were basically a lie." A less sanguine Marlon Riggs notes however that "at some point the lie becomes disabling." This phenomenon is hardly unprecedented. To answer the needs of the present, a figure out of the shared past is transformed into a moral exemplar—with varying degrees of violence to the historical record. The cult surrounding Malcolm reflects the failures in our time of black nationalism, and a consequent yearning, Adolph Reed argues, "for a different reality in lieu of engaging the one that actually confronts us." If the cases of John F. Kennedy, Robert E. Lee, and Abraham Lincoln are any indication, in time, the connection becomes so remote, the memory of failure or sense of loss so attenuated, that for a new generation the exemplar no longer has a meaning and is returned to history. For Malcolm X this is unlikely to happen anytime soon. □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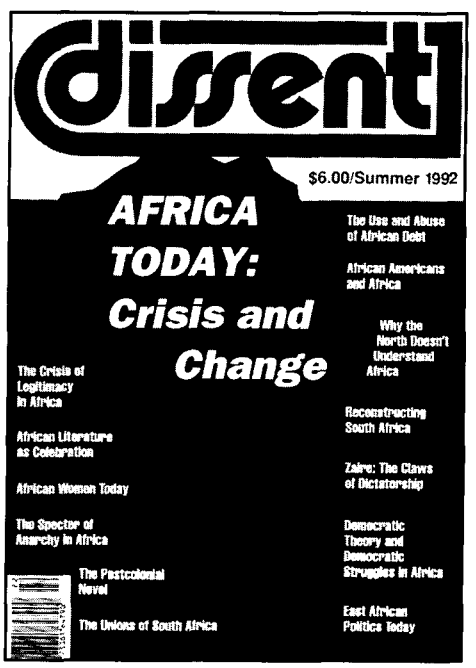
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Todd Gitlin

GLIB, TAWDRY, SAVVY & STANDARDIZED

Television and American Culture

Prognostications about media and society generally oscillate between two poles: to the north, one hears dithyrambs to a projected utopia offering fingertip access to all the information and images a citizen might need to enrich democracy and multiply freedom beyond recognition; from the south, one hears low moans about a dystopia of absolute surveillance and stupefaction. I resolve to violate certain hitherto sacrosanct rules of prognostication: I pledge not to invoke the bogeyman Big Brother; nor to use the words "horizon," "limitless," or "technological revolution"; nor to presume that the consequences of television are going to turn out all of a piece, the same for the entire society at all times, the same for a five-year-old in the Bronx as for a sixty-five-year-old in Tucson, the same for a keyboard operator or an apple picker as for an Apple executive, the same in the year 2000 as in 2010, 2100, or, God knows, 3000 or 30,000.

It is high time there was a code of modesty for prophets. After all, the entire history of radio and television takes up no more than a century. Seventy-five years ago, no one, not even Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover or the entrepreneur-to-be David Sarnoff, could have anticipated that radio, then television, would become the virtual property of commercial interests. Ten years ago, it was all the rage among media pundits to welcome, or warn against, the age of interactive television. Recently, the flacks, and Ross Perot, are at it again about the wonders of instant pseudodemocracy, as if our common life were a game show in which pushbuttons substitute for deliberation. Highly touted virtual reality may be this decade's bubble, to be featured in some future museum of great-inventions-that-didn't-catch-on.

Having covered my flank with cautions, I want to double back and propose that in the remotely foreseeable future we can anticipate more of Aldous Huxley's soma than George Orwell's You-Know-Who. We have more to fear from the endless production of triviality and a deep popular addiction to it than from propaganda; more to fear from a glut of images and stories than from ideological bias. Alongside some excellent work, we will see a thin, soulless, nihilist standardization of culture overriding nominal "diversity." At the same time, the deep cleavage between class cultures will persist, the wonders of channel-glut being affordable by what might be called a two-thirds society. Heavily (but far from exclusively) because of the televisualization of everyday life, we will continue to be flooded by glibness in speech and style; dazzled by a convergence of information and entertainment; yet at the same time, suspicious and preternaturally savvy. Whatever the political differences, we will also be awash in bicoastal Washington-Hollywood co-productions in the tradition furthered by the teams of Reagan & Deaver, Bush & (Ted) Turner, and Clinton & the Bloodworth-Thomasons.

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It is deservedly a commonplace of current talk about media that broadcasting is being eaten away by narrowcasting; that the future belongs not to the common hearth but to the niche. "We" are no longer being addressed so much in the ensemble as by the zip code, the clan, the tribe. Now, no one can doubt the decline of common media—from *Life, Look*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* to the network news. However, what is frequently missed in the enthusiasm for "diversity" is that the newly programmed niches share, in many respects, common styles. The great bulk of the fifty or more channels available through major metropolitan cable systems consist largely of segments of the old network broadcasting day stretched out for round-the-clock availability: Hollywood movies, sports, ancient sitcom episodes, conventional forms of news, children's cartoons. The post-network novelties are music, C-SPAN, home shopping, evangelical Christianity, minority culture specialties (African American, Spanish language, and so on) and public access, which, all told, account for a small fraction of the audience. But even much of the latter—say, Black Entertainment Television and Soulbeat, Televisa, Christian Broadcasting—thrive on the same empty slickness, the same undiminished enthusiasm for breathless entertainment.

It is taken for granted across the channels that shallow entertainment shall remain the major thrust of programming and the major use people make of television. Amid the bombardment of images, people continue to collect the images of their choice as markers for identity, surrogates for public opinion, windows into a constricted world. Information is packaged to dovetail with the entertainment function—to keep people watching. Much so-called information programming crosses, or blurs, the boundary—thus the "infotainment" of scandal-mongering syndication shows, talk shows, "magazines," and the like. One should not be automatically scandalized by this crossover—the telling of stories, fictional or nonfictional, has always partaken of the arts of mythmaking. What is peculiar, though, is American culture's relentless hunger for celebrities, along with a fascination with the process by which celebrity is manufactured. The culture of mythmaking is a culture in which the genuinely heroic has been downgraded. When everything is "theatricalized," to use Neal Gabler's apt if ungainly term, then what is noble? what is valuable? what matters? Television should not be expected to answer the question, but a mature culture might be expected to pose it.

Given the immensity of America and its experiences, it is startling to see how limited are our shared cultural forms—as if we were so afraid of centrifugal tendencies that we stripped down our common core. The dominant entertainment forms remain the action-adventure, the family-centered sitcom, the cop show, the soap opera, and the "magazine" (which shares aspects of the other four). The stories remain, for the most part, focused on the private travails, foibles, and triumphs of individuals. Television's allergy to high culture, to complex speech, to the difficult and demanding, the sacred and the lasting remains a given. We need not be High Anglicans to worry lest, given fifty or five hundred channels, most Americans most of the time shall for the most part remain, in T.S. Eliot's words, "distracted from distraction by distraction."

Put it another way: television critics will not need to fold their tents. Nor will serious writers need to feel redundant. Television will remain a white noise, a bane, a cheapening as well as an instrument for occasional far-seeing. The *New Yorker* recently carried a Charles Barsotti cartoon in which a man with the head of a television set and a troubled face is saying, "But Marge, *five hundred* channels. Won't that make a difference?" Marge, suitcases in hand, is striding away from him, toward the door. Marge will, should, must walk out that door.

The counselors of the form of despair that masquerades as relentless cheerfulness will sigh and say that easy distraction is "what people want"—all people? at all times?—and yet recognize that there are other works, not yet known, that some people, or many people, want, or might want; and that just because mobs are not knocking on corporate doors "demanding" serious work—any more than

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mid-nineteenth-century hordes beat on Herman Melville's door "demanding" a fat novel about a white whale—does not mean that our culture can thrive without the difficult, the demanding, the true, and the beautiful. I have read that Daniel Boone was in the habit of taking *Gulliver's Travels* with him to read at his evening fire. Are today's cultural entrepreneurs proud of their present-day substitutes, the Schwarzenegger-Van Damme "product" that flatters today's rugged pseudoindividualists?

It will come as no news that the search to maximize audience, even in the narrower bands to which cable aspires, still dominates decision making. And the search to maximize viewership across the broadcast band and the cable box is no automatic guarantee of "diversity" except in a shallow sense. This is partly because public financing remains scanty and the choices ethnocentric (less than 1 percent of all network and public television prime-time programs combined are imported, and most of that sliver is English). It is partly because talent aspires to make it big, partly because there is little space on the band for deviant artistry, and partly because of the self-sequestering of much of the putative avant-garde. And it is also because the movies available during most of the broadcast day on pay channels are, mostly, standard Hollywood stuff, purveying the shriveled imaginations of directors and writers who have, in turn, been reared on TV-style, speaking TV-speak, seeing through banal camera frames. The styles of English- and Spanish-language soap operas resemble each other more than they differ. In the margins, competition, true enough, brings us Discovery, Nickelodeon, and Bravo; it also brings the three rival versions of the Amy Fisher Story.

Speaking of Amy Fisher, it is worth underscoring the obvious fact that the proliferation of choices costs money. To those who have options shall more options be given. The supermarket is far gaudier on the better side of the tracks. C-SPAN, Discovery, and, Home Box Office go into some 60 percent of the households, but that is scarcely "everyone"; and to those who cannot or will not bear the freight, the industry slogan seems to be, "Let them eat game shows and Amy Fisher stories." As the more sophisticated audience seeps away to cable, and the networks' more prosperous audience correspondingly erodes, the cost pressure mounts. One result is more public affairs—but not necessarily better, deeper, more thoughtful public affairs—and, meanwhile, more coarseness for the masses. The bifurcation of culture between a glutted middle road and a rutted low road holds true, by the way, not only for programmed television but for computer networks, portable phones, mobile faxes, beepers, and the rest of the panoply of devices that enable grouplets to maintain their dense communications mesh. To those awash in electromagnetic waves, more shall be sent, and more savvy shall be the recipients.

True, the uniformity that overrides class bifurcation is nothing new—Tocqueville observed many of its features one-hundred and fifty years ago, before the birth of electronics or the modern corporation. Comparable to the fast-and-loose, sensationalist, action-adventure, once-over-lightly stage uniformity that Tocqueville observed, today's video uniformity is manifest in the phenomenon that social critic Bruce Springsteen has aptly called "Fifty-Seven Channels and Nothing On." Alongside, or beneath, whatever "diversity" is emerging, there is also something of a common style that carries across television in general—from the sitcom to the news, the commercial to the late-night chat, from Arsenio Hall to David Letterman. It overrides most ethnic and regional differences. There are two dimensions to this commonality: glibness and nihilism. But I don't mean to draw hard-and-fast distinctions: for example, I would be hard pressed to know exactly how to categorize "The McLaughlin Group."

When I speak of glibness, I include the relentless pace, the slick visuals (known in Hollywood as "high production values"), the byplay of least resistance, and the attention-shifting discontinuity that can only be called violent. I also include the obsession with the joky comeback, which dominates sitcoms, as well as news "chat," talk shows, even sports coverage. Sitcoms, inspired—if that is the

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word—by advertising, purvey a never-ending stream of one-liner put-downs, both mirroring and inspiring comparable conversational styles among young people who grow up bombarded by more of the same. America's comic taste for the quick and the broad has served us in many ways, greasing us past the frictions of a polyglot, transnational society; but another need, the hunger for a deep response to the world and to life, is not well assuaged by the endless detritus that pours through the screen.

The thin culture that television, for the most part, purveys and re-purveys, with reruns of oldies substituting for any rich sense of history, does indeed gesture toward a certain sophistication. As the elevation of David Letterman makes clear, mainstream television has learned to cultivate a knowing attitude in which the audience is brought in on the contrivances of performance. Television, the vehicle of formula, has also become, and will continue to be, the vehicle of banal deconstruction. Routinely, with "Saturday Night Live" and Ted Koppel, in the self-referential Spike Lee-Michael Jordan commercials and the likes of "I'm not a doctor but I play one on TV," the audience is flattered that it has been brought behind the scenes, become savvy to spin doctors, joke writers, and hucksters, while our savvy becomes the format for yet another round of media formula. We are immersed in show business while we are simultaneously taught that it is, after all, business. Even the most sophisticated spectators become voyeurs of the processes by which they are managed. "Entertainment Tonight" makes us privy to box-office success just as pollsters make us privy to electoral projections—and we delight in having been brought behind the scenes. One need not go so far as Mark Crispin Miller, who calls this prevailing attitude "the hipness unto death," to wonder whether what television undermines is not any particular belief but the possibility of belief at all.

Television thrived on comedy and violence, and on hybrid combinations. We segue from sentimentality to harshness and back again. The era of "Read my lips" is an era prepared by television, and while encouragement may be found in the election of a man who speaks in whole sentences and likes to conduct audiovisual seminars, it is unlikely that a single election will serve to overcome our contemporary slickness unto death. In the hue and cry over George Bush's, or, rather, Peggy Noonan's famous slogan, far more critical attention was paid to the legibility of the president's lips than the appalling nastiness and simplemindedness (or is this redundant?) of his form of address. But then, this is a culture that exports the grunts of Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger with aplomb in its contribution to cultural universality.

Gresham's Law is also the inexorable ally of television's other contribution to nihilism: pure violence. The networks, however diminished their reach, continue to compete with unregulated cable; and their censors—more permissive about the gouging of flesh than the exposure of it—aren't the potentates they used to be. Unregulated cable, in turn, has made itself beholden to the so-called achievements of Hollywood's technological whizzes, make-up artists, and directors trained, in turn, in the shallowness and routine violence of television. We can expect growing smarminess, despite the efforts of the Rev. Donald Wildmon and his fundamentalist minions. Violent criminality remains common currency. The incessant bang-bang of entertainment has juiced up the "Cops" and "Hard Copies" and "America's Most Wanteds," which, in turn, have affected the styles of so-called hard news—as evident in, for example, last year's Gennifer Flowers media stampede, the rise of ambush interviews on local and network news, the NBC–General Motors truck scandal, and the routine spillover of television movies into the 11 o'clock news.

True, on the positive side, those who are interested have access to many more hours of breaking news. C-SPAN, for those with the cable and the time, affords the chance to follow unscripted stories, as, less reliably, does CNN. Still, with the (sometimes important) exceptions of press conferences, hearings, and wars, CNN broadcasts are crammed into the formats to which the networks have accustomed us—the reporter who has just parachuted into a place he or she barely knows, the superficial questions, the reportorial stand-up, the posture

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of balance, the truncated debate, the presentation of the world in snippets, the clutter of sound bites. As for impact, CNN weighs on political and media elites more than on the public at large—but this is no small impact. I don't know what President Clinton's habits are, but George Bush, Saddam Hussein, and Max Frankel, the editor of the *New York Times*, have all been simultaneously wired to CNN. When images can trigger wars, invasions, humanitarian missions and presidential agendas alike, this uncommon carrier has an amazing responsibility.

The quantity and reach of coverage is not quality. The Pentagon learned from Vietnam that controlled access is the most successful control. (Military-journalistic co-productions [to use Tom Engelhardt's phrase] are to journalism as military music is to music.) CNN's endless coverage of the Gulf War, much of it—especially from Peter Arnett—admirable, still did very little to go behind the technological whiz-bang of Air Force markmanship claims to discharge one obligation of the media in a democratic society: to expedite a debate about the origins, the stakes, the rights and wrongs of the war, and where such a debate ought to go. While television distinguished itself, relatively speaking, during the pre-war period of legitimate debate (from November 6, 1990, when President Bush doubled the troop level, to January 1, 1991, when the UN coalition attacked), no sooner was the congressional debate over and the fighter-bombers set loose than television debate ended. The story was suddenly strictly military. The networks' military experts were as dazzled as their viewers by Patriot missiles; the news managers became impresarios for flag-waving parades. The ominous model of media-military co-production has more recently been renewed during the Marine landing in Somalia and the renewed bombings in Iraq—whatever one's opinion of these interventions. Talk radio, for all its bombast, has been a more fruitful zone for informed dispute than television.

I have returned, then, willy-nilly, to my apprehensions. For all the abundance of delivery systems, under foreseeable circumstances the small screen is unlikely to transform the possibilities of culture for the better. I realize that I have not taken into account the technological marvels that are present and forthcoming: high-density, improved sound, split screens, "virtual reality." The remote-control device is an excellent means of overcoming tedium—or at least speeding it up. Many are the pleasures that technology can, and likely will, afford. Profuse is the learning as well as the deadening and degradation that are possible when an abundance of outlooks and information reaches into the limited world of the home.

I don't want to settle into a warm bath of nostalgia for the days of the common hearth. The "Golden Age" of television, let us not forget, was essentially white and mediocre. Without doubt, the proliferation of choices—the possibility of "video publishing"—amounts to a net improvement over the days when most people were limited to three networks. The loss of a common culture of "Father Knows Best," the "Camel News Caravan" and "Gilligan's Island" is not to be deplored. But *pace* George Lucas and Akio Morita, culture is never saved by technological improvement. The newsstand that offers a profusion of skiing, running, dressing, and model-railroad magazines alongside a thin display of magazines of ideas and opinions is not a tribute to the universal cornucopia of the marketplace—it has accepted easy marketability as the prime criterion for display.

The long-running continuities in American culture are at least as impressive as the latest developments. In the spirit of continuity, Thoreau's question about the telegraph deserves to haunt us. When told that Maine could now communicate directly with Texas, he replied with what we would now call an inquiry into software: "What if Maine has nothing to say to Texas?" □

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Jeffrey C. Isaac

CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE SPIRIT OF REVOLT

The idea of civil society has a long history in Western political thought. Developed by such Enlightenment thinkers as Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, and Thomas Paine, and taken up in systematic form by Hegel, it refers to those human networks that exist independently of, if not anterior to, the political state.

In liberal theory such networks are considered to have moral priority, and the state is seen as a means of protecting them. Even those nineteenth-century liberal theorists who did not postulate a state of nature anterior to politics—Benjamin Constant, Alexis de Tocqueville, Alexander Herzen—saw civil society as the realm of freedom, and considered the state a dangerous means of preserving freedom that always threatened to exceed its proper function. For these thinkers it was above all revolution that threatens freedom, by unleashing popular radicalism and consolidating political power in the hands of revolutionary elites. The great virtue of civil society, in this view, is that it inhibits such revolutionary tendencies, encouraging what Tocqueville called "self-interest rightly understood," thus helping to sustain orderly social life and the rule of law.

In socialist theory, especially in Marxism, modern civil society is considered compromised by the property relations of capitalism. The problem, then, is how to organize a socialist working-class movement, to conquer political power—whether by reform, revolution, or some combination of the two—and to use the state in order to transform civil society. Liberals have traditionally paid a good deal of attention to the problem of political despotism, but have often failed to pay equal attention to the ways in which certain institutions of civil society itself may systematically limit individual freedom. Socialists have traditionally paid much attention to the way in which the market institutions of civil society eviscerate human relationships, producing inequalities and indignities; but they have too often failed to see the importance of limiting political power through the rule of law, and to recognize the benefits of social networks independent of the state.

For both liberalism and socialism the state is the principal concern of politics, whether the problem is to limit the state, as in liberalism, or to further empower it in the name of justice, as in socialism. Both are suspicious of utopianism in politics, of forms of insurgency that might disturb the orderly course prescribed by constitutional government or by the logic of history. For liberals this appears as a fear of extralegality and a temperamental commitment to moderation. For socialists this appears as a deep-seated commitment to channeling rebellious impulses in the proper, "progressive" historical direction.

Liberalism and socialism have been two of the most important modern ideologies, and their contest to achieve state power has defined the landscape of modern politics. Yet between the cracks of this landscape an alternative

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model of civil society has often surfaced. It is hard to pin a label on this model. Anarchist is perhaps a close approximation, but this term evokes associations—relentless negativism, propaganda of the deed—that are misleading. Let me then use the term "rebellious," which I draw from Albert Camus's essay *The Rebel*. A rebellious politics is a politics of voluntary associations, independent of the state, that seeks to create spaces of opposition to remote, disempowering bureaucratic and corporate structures. Such a politics is often directed against the state, but it does not seek to control the state in the way that political parties do. Neither does it lobby the state to achieve specific advantages, as do interest groups. Rather, it is a politics of moral suasion, seeking to constitute oases in the desert, to afford its practitioners a sense of dignity and empowerment, and to affect the political world through the force of its example and through its very specific, proximate results.

The insurgent character of such a politics distinguishes it from liberal constitutionalism; its concern is not limited to resisting state interference but to challenging the diverse sources of human oppression and indignity and to employing various means, including at times extraconstitutional ones, in order to press these challenges. At the same time, its small-scale, pluralistic refusal to privilege class politics, and relative lack of interest in questions of state power, distinguish it from socialism. Yet to call this model an alternative to liberalism and socialism is misleading, for its principal defenders reject totalizing ideologies and grandiose conceptions of political transformation.

This vision of civil society is an eclectic one. It has many sources, in political theory and political experience. Among its proponents were a number of Western political intellectuals, most of them European, who had participated in the resistance to Nazism during World War II. Hannah Arendt, a German Jew who fled Hitler, and who is best known as the author of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, was one of these intellectuals. In a number of essays Arendt reflected on the political meaning of the resistance to Nazism. She was fond of quoting an aphorism of René Char, the French poet who had participated actively in the French Resistance: "Our heritage was left to us by no testament."

What does this mean? Arendt explains: the collapse of French society in the face of totalitarian power had created a vacuum in French politics, which had become the province of collaborators and fools. Into this vacuum were sucked tens of thousands of resisters who had never participated in the official business of the French Third Republic. Arendt writes that "without premonition and probably against their conscious inclinations, they had come to constitute willy-nilly a public realm where—without the paraphernalia of officialdom and hidden from the eyes of friend and foe alike—all relevant business in the affairs of the country was transacted in deed and word." These subjects had become citizens through their resistance to oppression. But it was not simply their struggle against tyranny that mattered. For, as Arendt points out, every Allied soldier had fought against tyranny. What mattered most was that these members of the resistance "had become challengers, *they had taken the initiative upon themselves* and therefore, without even noticing it, had begun to create that public space between themselves where freedom could appear." They had become citizens of an elementary republic—the republic of resisters, of the "true France"—that existed in the interstices of official French society, a kind of citizenship that, paradoxically, was antipolitical, defined *against* the state.

Their freedom was left to them by no one. It was taken up by them in their efforts to struggle against their indignity. In their efforts to struggle against a specific evil—in this case Nazism—and to achieve quite specific results—the liberation of their country from totalitarian rule—they had discovered their own capacities for creative action.

I begin with this text because I believe that it speaks to certain aspects of your recent experience. I use "your" in the broadest sense here, to refer to those Russians, and more generally to those subjects of the former

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"Soviet bloc," who have in different ways resisted the dictates of the Communist party-state and sought to create spaces of freedom. I am thinking of people like Andrei Sakharov, whose scientific pursuits led him to become a resister, joining together with others to form a network of people committed to supporting freedom of thought and conscience; the journalists, writers, and historians who sought to preserve the integrity of their professions, and in so doing created small oases of freedom and integrity amid a political desert; the astonishing array of democratic political discussion groups, clubs, and associations that sprung to life as a result of the policy of *glasnost* (I rely here upon Geoffrey Hosking's excellent *The Awakening of the Soviet Union* [Harvard, 1991]).

In his famous essay on "The Power of the Powerless" Vaclav Havel tells the story of a simple greengrocer in communist Czechoslovakia who loyally posts a sign in his window proclaiming "Workers of the world unite." Why does the shopkeeper do this? Havel suggests that it is not done out of ideological conviction, but simply out of habit, as a way of getting along. Havel then imagines what would happen if the greengrocer one day took down his sign, if he began to tell others what he really thought, perhaps even to express solidarity with those with whom he shared common views. "In this revolt the greengrocer steps out of living within the lie. He rejects the ritual and breaks the rules of the game. He discovers once more his suppressed identity and dignity. He gives his freedom a concrete significance." Havel tells us that organizations like Charter 77 were constituted by small changes, small acts of conscience. Nothing monumental, nothing even political in the commonly understood sense. But such efforts sustained a sense of dignity and empowerment and, eventually, helped to undermine an oppressive state.

These are instances of a rebellious politics of civil society. Yet they are examples of a form of resistance directed against the kind of regimes that seem to have passed from the historical scene. It may be clear why we would wish to applaud such resistance, but it is reasonable to ask how it might instruct those concerned with constructing a *post*-totalitarian politics. What relevance do they have to your society, which is struggling to create a new form of constitutional politics consistent with political and economic normality? Although such activities might seem of limited relevance in a post-totalitarian age, I would suggest that they have a broader significance. To draw again from Albert Camus, they involve a resounding "no!" to totalitarianism, but they also proclaim an equally resounding "yes!" Such acts carry with them positive values. They testify to the power of the human spirit and to the creative abilities of people to find ways of asserting their autonomy under disempowering circumstances. In so doing they testify to an important kind of political experience with profoundly democratic implications. This is why they speak so powerfully to many Westerners, citizens of liberal democratic states, who are not contending against totalitarian oppression but are seeking fertile spaces in their own political deserts.

It would be presumptuous of me to interpret your own recent history for you. But let me return to my point of departure and remind you that a similar kind of resistance was undertaken by an earlier generation of European intellectuals. These writers experienced firsthand the traumas of Nazism and Stalinism. They were forced into various kinds of exile and were deeply disillusioned by the rise of Stalinism, the brutal forced collectivization and the purges, the betrayal of the Spanish Republic, the authoritarianism of the local Communist parties in Italy, France, the United States. Many, like Ignazio Silone, had been communists; many, like Victor Serge or Dwight Macdonald, had gravitated toward Trotskyism. Others, like Simone Weil, Albert Camus, George Orwell, Nicola Chiaromonte, were members of the independent left, attached to various worker and antifascist organizations but unconnected to formal parties of the left. These figures opposed fascism *and* communism, but they opposed capitalism as well. This gave them little room on which to stand, and yet it also gave their radicalism an open, nondoctrinaire character.

These intellectuals discovered in the experience of resistance an exhilarating sense of

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solidarity, a sense of what was politically possible through dedicated activism among small committed groups of people, which starkly contrasted with their disillusionment with parliamentary politics, state bureaucracies, and revolutionary parties. They formed a set of overlapping networks—many wrote for the American magazine called *politics* between 1944 and 1949—but they did not constitute an organization or formulate a common program. Yet in their writings they converged upon a common view of politics.

They argued that the modern world has been driven to disaster by a dangerous faith in human power. The most horrifying versions of this hubris were the ideologically driven programs of Nazism and Stalinism, the typical totalitarian regimes. But this has also poisoned twentieth-century liberalism, which has been corrupted by its faith in the nation-state, in technology, and in limitless economic growth as solutions to problems of human justice. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki epitomized this dangerous faith. Albert Camus declared upon learning of Hiroshima that "our technical civilization has just reached its greatest level of savagery." Nor was Camus alone in criticizing modern technological society. Thinkers like Arendt and Weil also argued that modern economic and political processes instrumentalize the world, uproot peoples and communities, continually expropriate and transform nature and people, recognizing no limit.

Both liberalism and socialism had been guilty of such unbridled confidence in human power. Both had produced bureaucratic and disempowering mass political organizations, both saw the centralized nation-state as the principal agency of politics, and both had lost touch with the humanistic impulses that had originally motivated them. Neither liberalism, wedded to the idea of the individual as the seat of autonomous reason, nor socialism, wedded to the idea of a progressive working class, could come to terms with the mass society that had developed. In such a society individuals behave neither like Kantian reasoners, nor like Tocquevillean participants in a vibrant civil life, nor like Marxian socialists seeking to transform capitalism. Instead, the institutions of bureaucratic government, corporate decisionmaking, and mass media advertising render individuals more and more the recipients of images and directives. Within the constraints of such a society civil and political freedom are possible; but such freedom is far removed from meaningful democratic participation.

In the face of the failures of liberalism and Marxism to support a vibrant democratic politics, the resistance had presaged a new model of politics. This model did not give up on the possibilities for political radicalism and refused to make its peace with the disempowering structures of modernity, even if it did give up on the idea of a total transformation of society or a radical transcendence of modernity.

This kind of politics has three main characteristics. First, it is self-constituted, undertaken by voluntary associations, more or less spontaneously formed, that are organized to resist specific injustices. Such associations are not mass organizations but smaller groups capable of affording real empowerment and sustaining authentic commitment. As Andrea Cafi, the Russian anarchist, wrote: "Today the multiplication of groups of friends, sharing the same anxieties and united by respect for the same values, would have much more importance than a huge propaganda machine. Such groups would not need any compulsory rule. They would not rely on [mass] collective action, but rather on personal initiative and effective solidarity, such as can be developed only by friends who know each other well." The models here are the eighteenth-century French *societés de pensées* and nineteenth-century Russian *kruzhki*, enclaves where a vigorous public sphere was created amid the authoritarianism of official political life.

Second, it is present-oriented, intended not to realize a grand historical objective but to afford proximate forms of mutual solidarity and empowerment. A model for this is the activism of Dr. Rieux in Albert Camus's 1947 novel *The Plague*, an allegory of the resistance to Nazism. Rieux, a leader of the resistance,

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refuses any macro-political program, preferring to work tirelessly with his small band of dedicated colleagues. He declares, "Salvation's much too big a word for me. I don't aim so high. I'm concerned with man's health; and for me his health comes first." Ivan Jirous, the Czech democrat, articulates a similar idea when he observes that "these independent activities are their own goals. In them, the intrinsic tendency of people to create things of value is realized. By giving meaning to their lives and the lives of those close to them, people are able to resist the sense of futility that threatens to swallow them up." This does not mean that such a politics has no practical objectives; but these flow out of the activity itself, and radiate, so to speak, from it in often unpredictable ways. What grounds political activity is not a leap of faith about the future, but the sense of efficacy and integrity that is bound up with what responsible agents can and do accomplish in the present.

Finally, it is self-limiting, guided by a healthy awareness of its own partiality and a ceaseless reflexivity about itself: the means it employs, the limitations of its vision, and the existence of alternative projects and groups with which it must come to some rapprochement. The idea of self-limitation was a crucial lesson for these writers, whose experience had instructed them that in politics all values are relative and any claims to absolute righteousness or moral purity dangerous, encouraging arrogance and acrimonious conflict. As Camus noted, pure and unadulterated virtue is homicidal.

Such a politics would be contrary to mass politics. It would not seek to involve everyone at once or to incorporate itself in any grand scheme. Instead it would work at the margins of mass politics, challenging its organizations and priorities, disturbing its order through the force of example and moral appeal. In her book *On Revolution* Hannah Arendt described such efforts as "islands in a sea or oases in a desert," where "those who belong are self-chosen, those who do not belong are self-excluded." Such oases are not wholesale alternatives to liberal representative government; they exist in tension with it, operating below the state and across state boundaries, challenging the sovereignty of the nation-state while also energizing its representative institutions.

This model of politics is not a pipe dream or academic construction. It has appeared at various times in the twentieth century—the revolutionary soviets, the Hungarian worker councils of 1956, the American civil rights movement—only to become suppressed, or coopted, or otherwise to fade from the scene. As Arendt pointed out, such a politics is evanescent; even when it makes an impact, its energies tend to evaporate or become absorbed into the broader political currents. Yet this elusive tradition has not passed entirely from the scene. I think of your own *samizdat* movement and Charter 77; I might also mention the Green movements in Western Europe, or European Nuclear Disarmament (END), the influential peace movement, or the Helsinki Citizens Assembly established in 1990.

There is a wonderful irony in my being invited to your country to speak to you about this. For your own recent experience offers a vivid testimony to what I am speaking of. Furthermore, Russia has historically been a wellspring of ideas that helped to inspire the resistance writers on whom I have drawn. There is a rich Russian anarchist tradition that includes the writings of Tolstoy, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Voline, Emma Goldman, but also the kinds of political experiments that culminated in the institution of the soviets. Of course this tradition is not without its own difficulties. It is voluntaristic and has often downplayed the importance of enduring organizations, including state organizations, and underestimated the virtues of political parties and parliamentary institutions as means of holding government accountable. It is elitist; even if it does not exclude specific groups of people, the kinds of demands it makes on people leaves it ill-suited to the low level of political commitment most citizens prefer. At its best it embodies positive ideals of human dignity, but the simple fact of the matter is that for good reasons most people crave the security and peace of mind that only a

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more normal form of politics—a constitutional politics—can offer.

Yet this cannot be the last word, for as Peter Kropotkin noted in his 1880 essay entitled "The Spirit of Revolt," those "prudent and cautious ones" who are preoccupied with political order forget the intrusion of "the unexpected." They forget that even the best political institutions become ossified, remote, impervious to the need for change. So Kropotkin insists that "the structure of society is something that is never finally constituted," that is always in the process of change.

A rebellious politics of civil society is a politics of vigorous argument about political alternatives. It is a politics of critique, pointing out discrepancies between ideals and realities. It is not a mindless negativism but an openness to new ideas and forms of empowerment and a principled opposition to the bureaucratic tendencies of modern life. As Tocqueville saw, a healthy associational life—thriving churches, rotary clubs, professional associations, and other groupings—and the civic culture of toleration that it promotes, can be the foundation of a stable democratic order. I need not tell you that such an order is a vast improvement over both the party-state that long ruled Russia and the fractious tribalism that now threatens many parts of the world. But the achievement of a stable liberal order is not an unmixed blessing. The modern world is a world of enormous progress, and also enormous injustice, homelessness, and ecological disaster. The conditions of modern mass society tend to reduce civil society to a state of conformity and apathy. There is a fine yet fateful line separating healthy forms of toleration from mere indifference. And beneath such indifference there often lurk feelings of alienation and resentment, with dangerous, antidemocratic implications.

This is the limit of liberal democracy. As a form of practical politics it is frequently unable to move beyond politics as usual and to generate creative solutions to public problems. And as a form of democratic government it is seldom able to sustain public solidarity and participation. For this reason much of what is good about liberal democratic societies—civil rights and liberties, minimal social security, environmental protection, women's rights, workers' rights—is a result of cycles of political rebellion that go beyond the normal forms of liberal politics.

The spirit of revolt shakes things up. Mass media governed by the profit motive, making minimal demands on the intelligence of their consumers, frustrate this. Bureaucratic states and remote political parties frustrate this. Modernity, in its sheer scale and impersonality, frustrates this. All of these frustrating things are with us; and it does not look as if they are fading from the scene.

It is above all for this reason that we need to keep the spirit of revolt alive. The kinds of experiments in political resistance that have flourished in your country's recent past are inspirational examples of a courageous politics that afforded opportunities to those who felt constrained by the conditions under which they lived and worked. Our world needs more of this.

Those of you interested in a transition to democracy have much to learn from the Western experience of liberal constitutional government and a mixed economy. The liberal rule of law is an indispensable condition of personal and political freedom. Equally indispensable are the kinds of social and economic reforms long supported by social democratic movements for, as your country is only beginning to learn, the untrammeled market is far from benign, and the state is not the only source of suffering and injustice. Politics in the West is diverse, and it includes those, like myself, who hope to learn from your experience of civil resistance against communism.

It may well be that the most pressing historical task now before your country is to create liberal democratic institutions. It is important to see this not simply as a problem of political engineering but as a problem of the self-empowerment of democratic constituencies. Yet I submit that the idea that mankind has before it a single "task" prescribed by "history" is thoroughly discredited. I hope that in your understandable concern with political normality you will not forsake more rebellious forms of politics. For they are a valuable treasure, with untapped riches to offer. □

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Neil McLaughlin

BEYOND "RACE VS. CLASS"

The Politics of William Julius Wilson

Some fifteen years ago, in his book *The Declining Significance of Race*, the sociologist William Julius Wilson argued that the destruction of Jim Crow in the American South and the changes brought about by the civil rights movement had given rise to a new pattern of American race relations. Race had declined in significance, Wilson argued, because there was now a sizable black middle class whose life chances were not determined solely by skin color. Class was now more important than race.

Some left and liberal thinkers applauded Wilson for highlighting the dynamics of class and the structure of the economy,[1] but others charged him with betraying the interests of African Americans. According to the Association of Black Sociologists, Wilson was guilty of "omit[ting] significant data regarding the continuing discrimination against blacks at all class levels." Professor Charles Willie accused Wilson of taking "the perspective of the dominant people of power" and ignoring the role that racism plays in the experience of middle-class blacks.

New controversies were touched off by Wilson's next book, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987), which focused on the economic decline of the poorer segments of the black working class. Where *The Declining Significance of Race* had been criticized for painting an excessively optimistic picture of middle class blacks, this book, in the view of many critics, presented too bleak a picture of urban "pathology" among the black poor.[2]

Since the publication in 1982 of Ken Auletta's book *The Underclass*, discussions of poverty have been dominated by the "underclass debate"—the notion that there is a permanent group of poor people who have fallen out of the class structure. Many liberal scholars and activists, both black and white, argue that by taking part in this debate Wilson has played into the hands of conservatives, who focus on the pathology of inner-city crime, drugs, and single-parent families instead of the structural and racial sources of black poverty.[3] Wilson's defenders hold that he has made a major contribution toward establishing the historical roots of black poverty.

The fierce debates surrounding Wilson's work have not always furthered the larger discussion about race and class. Some liberal scholars have unfairly labeled the social-democratic Wilson a neoconservative. At the same time, Wilson's defenders have failed to acknowledge some inadequacies in his approach and thus helped to blur the complexities of the debate.

In *The Truly Disadvantaged*, Wilson offers a major empirical proposition to help explain black poverty. He argues that there is an urban underclass of poor blacks left out of the modern economy largely because of a shift in the U.S. occupational structure from industrial labor to the postindustrial service sector. Unskilled blacks thus have fewer opportunities for upward mobility than did earlier unskilled European immigrants. The end of strict segregation and the opportunities available to the black middle class have left the inner-city black poor socially isolated—much more so than earlier generations of blacks and the immigrant poor, who lived near the middle class and a

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stable working class. In addition, unskilled and semiskilled jobs have moved out of the inner city in massive numbers in the last twenty years. Housing markets, geographic segregation, and a "skills mismatch," as well as the lack of decent public transportation, have combined with overt job discrimination to create high levels of black unemployment.

Wilson argues that the situation of the black poor has deteriorated in the last twenty years neither because of an increase in racism nor, as conservatives say, because of the decline of the family and the work disincentives of the welfare state. The decline of stable two-parent families, the disintegration of inner-city communities, and the rise of crime and homelessness are, for Wilson, directly related to large-scale economic changes.

Wilson's Critics

Despite Wilson's structural explanation of urban decay, the most vocal criticisms of his work have come from left-liberal scholars. The urban sociologist Norman Fainstein claims that Wilson's skills-mismatch thesis is an inadequate explanation for African-American economic disadvantages. Fainstein writes, "Urban blacks are not particularly dependent on a declining manufacturing sector; rather, they suffer from segmentation into low-wage employment in growth industries." Fainstein argues that the persistence of extreme poverty among blacks is best explained in terms of employment segmentation and racial segregation. This view "stresses the continuing disadvantages suffered across the black class structure—albeit in a variety of forms—thereby the continuing significance of race."

Fainstein is off the mark when, with his reference to "the continuing significance of race," he implies that Wilson believes racism has disappeared from American life (a charge made by many of Wilson's critics).[4] Wilson's thesis, as his title makes clear, is the *declining* significance, not the *insignificance* of race. Could it really be argued that in the middle 1970s (when Wilson wrote the book) racism had *not* declined in the United States?

The interviews in sociologist Robert Blauner's *Black Lives, White Lives: Three Decades of Race Relations in America* (1990) provide evidence that white racism did decline from the late 1960s to the late 1970s (although the racial climate deteriorated again during the last decade). To be sure, racism can decline while remaining pervasive. I think Wilson does underestimate racism, but he has never argued that it does not exist. The real question social scientists should be examining is the *relationship* between race and class.

Sociologists Alphonso Pinkney and Charles Willie were right to point out that the black middle class suffers from racism more severely than is allowed for by Wilson. Educated, upwardly mobile blacks do encounter barriers to advancement simply because of their race—while ambitious blacks of earlier generations were more likely to suffer the combined disadvantages of race and class.

The best single example of the problems faced by middle-class blacks is that of housing markets, a subject Wilson refers to only briefly in *The Declining Significance of Race*. Economist Ray Franklin points out that the gap between blacks and whites is significantly larger in terms of wealth than in terms of income. For Franklin, this can be explained largely by the effects of housing segregation, because it is through housing that middle-class and stable working-class people accumulate wealth.

A growing body of sociological research, especially the work of demographer Douglas S. Massey, documents how Wilson's stress on changing occupational structures and the new urban poverty needs to be supplemented by more attention to housing segregation. Not only do our major cities continue to be racially segregated, but, says Massey, the degree of black segregation does not fall even when education and income rise. Massey points out that although the income gap between the black poor and the black middle class increased throughout the 1970s, the degree of geographic separation between the rich and poor remains lower among blacks than among any other ethnic group.

In addition, as Stephen Steinberg writes, "[B]lack workers *are* being discriminated

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against directly, to a far greater extent than Wilson acknowledges." In his stress on the relative advantages of the black middle class and the misery of the "truly disadvantaged" Wilson has tended to neglect concrete discussion of the problems of the black working class.

As Wilson has pointed out, a liberal stress on ending racism simply through affirmative action can blur the fact that having more black doctors, lawyers, and professors will not in itself increase the living standards of the black poor. This critique of affirmative action, however, concentrates almost exclusively on professional and middle-class jobs. He largely ignores firefighters, bus drivers, police, and construction workers as well as civil-service and health-care workers, precisely the kinds of occupations that have served as ladders for impoverished immigrants. As Thomas and Mary Edsall's *Chain Reaction* has made clear, it is with regard to blue-collar occupations that the political backlash against affirmative action has been most acute. Yet the intellectual debates have focused on the professions, proof that backlash begins at home. Wilson neglects the fact that the real benefits of affirmative action are likely to be seen in the stable working-class jobs that have been declining so drastically over the last several years.

Yet the government-promoted job creation that Wilson advocates would make it easier to address black demands—in good economic times it's easier to ask white workers to make sacrifices for the sake of racial justice. But Wilson has not, until recently, given enough attention to the kind of evidence of racism in employment marshalled, for example, by Roger Waldinger and Thomas Bailey's work on the New York construction industry, a study that stresses the racist consequences of ethnic nepotism in construction unions. Moreover, a 1991 Urban Institute study on racism in hiring for entry-level jobs shows how black workers face discrimination because of race and not, in this case, a "skills mismatch."

Wilson's speculations about the origins of the "underclass" have stimulated a massive debate on urban poverty among social scientists. The empirical results are not yet in; the first round of the debate has largely been conceptual and methodological. It seems clear, however, that Wilson has been right to stress a serious deterioration in the life circumstances of the black inner-city poor. Young black men had the lowest rate of suicide in the nation in the early seventies and now have the highest. Whether this situation justifies a new social category that can be explained by the new social isolation of the poor or by a "skills mismatch" is an unresolved matter.

Sociologist William Kornblum has written the most sensible piece on the underclass (*Dissent*, Spring 1991). He argues that we should think of the underclass as part of the working poor rather than as a separate class. But if journalists, policy makers, and academics insist on keeping the term, it should refer to "those people who are trapped in a netherworld at the bottom of both the legal and illegal class systems." This group of people is relatively small (although growing), is concentrated in central cities and segregated ghettos, and is characterized by some combination of addiction, homelessness, mental illness, and destitution.

In response to criticisms, Wilson has abandoned the term underclass and now refers to the "ghetto poor." He has modified his thesis about the emergence of highly concentrated ghetto poverty by arguing that this is largely a regional phenomenon, pointing out that of the ten American cities most responsible for the national increase in concentrated poverty, nine are in the Northeast and Midwest. Finally, he has recently conceded that race remains more of a factor in the life chances of the black working class than he had allowed for.

Wilson's Contributions

Nonetheless, Wilson has made major contributions to our understanding of race and class in America. He has also played an important role in pushing academics to engage with the world outside the university. Not since the days of *An American Dilemma, The Lonely Crowd,* and *The End of Ideology* has a sociologist played such a prominent role in public intellectual life. Wilson does not write as clearly as earlier

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public intellectuals, and he hardly seems comfortable in the role of political actor, but a quick look at the narrow academic research in the major social science journals will make clear how valuable his work has been.

It is this "public intellectual" Wilson, however, who most angers some black and left intellectuals. As a black social scientist, his critics argue, Wilson has the responsibility to remind the public that racism has left a deep scar on American social life and remains a major barrier to the black poor and middle class.

By writing about "the declining significance of race" and the "underclass," Wilson does, at times, play into the hands of neoconservatives. Sociological research shows that although explicit racist ideologies *have* declined in influence, whites still interpret the gap between white and black success in individualistic terms that stress an alleged "lack of will or effort" on the part of blacks.[5] Because of this racist bias, Wilson should have been more alert to the danger that conservatives would use his work to criticize the traditional civil rights establishment, just as they have used the naive liberal writings of Shelby Steele. Yet, Wilson at least has had the courage to discuss the crisis of our inner cities, while liberal intellectuals, in an attempt to avoid blaming the victim, have suffered from a failure of nerve in dealing with poverty, crime, and social decay. In *The Truly Disadvantaged*, Wilson dates this abdication to the controversy that followed Daniel Patrick Moynihan's report on the black family in the 1960s. Building on the work of black social scientists such as W.E.B. DuBois, E. Franklin Frazier, and Kenneth Clark, Moynihan argued that the black family had been destroyed by slavery, leaving blacks trapped in a culture of poverty; for this he was denounced as a racist by many black activists and white liberals. Wilson maintains that Moynihan was treated unfairly and that since then liberals have been intimidated from discussing these issues in a serious way. Although Wilson glosses over problematic aspects of Moynihan's writings, he has done the left a major service by helping focus a large amount of intellectual energy on the poverty, violence, and hopelessness in American cities.

Moreover, Wilson has articulated a fairly coherent programmatic agenda for the democratic left, arguing that those concerned about black poverty must campaign for full and meaningful employment and an expansion of the American welfare state. He maintains that a race-specific policy based on some combination of affirmative action and economic programs for the black poor is insufficiently broad to capture popular support.

All this is akin to Jesse Jackson's call for moving from the racial battleground to the economic common ground and to Robert Kuttner's populist proposals. Wilson's argument is that we can fight racism only if we also speak to the economic interests and aspirations of the white working and lower middle class. (Although blacks suffer disproportionately from poverty, it is important to remember that large numbers of recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children [AFDC] are white.) This compelling argument for an American version of social democracy may be Wilson's most important contribution.

Wilson's Limitations and Beyond

Wilson bears some responsibility for the misunderstandings surrounding his work. He has not always presented his views lucidly. Wilson can be faulted for his argument that the attempt to eliminate black poverty must be smuggled in as a "hidden agenda" within a universalistic program. This is an inept way of presenting a profound truth. A universal agenda is a first principle for any serious attempt to deal with poverty among blacks. A single-payer national health care system, a Canadian-style family allowance, universal day care, an expansion of unemployment benefits, and federal job-creation programs would make an immense difference in the life chances of millions of blacks, especially the most poor and vulnerable. Unlike affirmative action, such programs can appeal to a majority of Americans and thus would be politically sustainable. Calling this a hidden agenda, however, is sure to alienate black and left intellectuals who quite

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rightly sense a certain timidity in Wilson's reluctance to say what he means. Moreover, conservatives are hardly likely to allow Wilson's "hidden agenda" to remain hidden for long. Racism in American politics must be confronted directly.

Finally, Wilson writes as if the timidity of liberals were the major reason for the decade-long ideological and political victories of the right. He downplays factors of some importance: the probusiness bias of the mass media, the massive funding of right-wing intellectuals, the economic instability of the 1970s and 1980s, which created insecurities that were tapped by the right, the power of antisocialist and antistatist ideologies in the United States, pervasive cultural individualism, and deep-seated popular racism.

We need to separate Wilson's programmatic contributions from his theoretical and strategic flaws. Wilson's approach shares the limitations of what Cornel West called in these pages a "liberal structuralist" perspective (*Dissent*, Spring 1991). According to West, the debate about the condition of blacks in contemporary America has been distorted by the dominance of both "liberal structuralists" and "conservative behaviorists." The liberals stress the historical and sociological sources of black poverty and call for a revived New Deal plus broad affirmative action. The conservatives see the problem as the behavior of blacks; their solution relies on "a cultural revival of the Protestant ethic in black America."

For West, both these views overlook "the profound sense of psychological depression, personal worthlessness, and social despair" in black America. This threat of nihilism is the result, for West, of centuries of racism, the terrible economic prospects for the black poor and working class, and the dominance of corporate institutions that have laid black civil society to waste.

Wilson's attempts to distance himself from "culture of poverty" arguments as well as his reliance on quantitative aggregate data and split-labor-market theory has led him to an analysis that underplays the cultural roots of racism. Yet the problems go much deeper than economic inequality and racial discrimination and require cultural analysis as well.

In an interview with the *New York Times* last year, Wilson indicated that his forthcoming book will deal with cultural factors, which he had previously avoided because of the "culture of poverty" debacle of the late 1950s and early 1960s. This is an important step forward for Wilson, but a move not without its intellectual dangers. The central theoretical question Wilson must grapple with is how to deal seriously with the role of personality and culture in urban poverty without losing sight of the structural factors he himself has played such an important part in establishing.

As sociologist Barbara Schmitter Heisler has argued, Wilson's perspective on contemporary urban poverty lacks an adequate comparative framework. Because the underclass is a problem almost exclusive to the United States, Wilson needs to frame his research agenda in a broader context that grapples with the issues of American exceptionalism and comparative welfare states.[6] For Heisler, Wilson's predominantly atheoretical, policy-oriented approach, although carefully reasoned, fails to place poverty in America in a context that directly challenges recent conservative attacks on the citizen rights of social inclusion that should be at the core of the modern welfare state.

Wilson will be able to transcend the limitations of the "liberal structuralism" that Cornel West cautions against only if he maintains a commitment to this comparative perspective. Wilson must offer us an analysis of race, class, and poverty that is structural, comparative, and deals sensitively with issues of family, gender, community, and psychology.

For all the energy spent debating Wilson's theories, research, and rhetoric, the key issue to look for in his upcoming book is his politics. The recent publication of a spate of mean-spirited books attacking the poor should end the silly arguments over whether William Julius Wilson is a closet conservative. Wilson has always been on the side of the democratic left. However, like many academic intellectuals, Wilson underestimates the importance of social movements. He tends to write about social programs as if what is at stake is simply a battle

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of ideas, a struggle between well- and badly designed policy options. But his goal of an expanded welfare state is inconceivable without a serious change in the balance of political forces. With a technocratic neoliberal in the White House, however, some of the inadequacies of Wilson's approach will become evident. The single major obstacle to progressive social policy continues to be the way corporate priorities determine investment decisions and dominate the American political process. Wilson has been far too reticent in challenging corporate power and must be pushed on this by the socialists among us.

Although the Moynihan debate had some influence on Wilson's recent work, Bayard Rustin was the major source of Wilson's politics in *The Declining Significance of Race*. Wilson's political writings can be understood as his attempt to provide an academic version of Rustin's famous 1965 call to move "from protest to politics." Yet we need protest *and* politics—a creative combination of the protest strategy of the 1960s with an electoral coalition approach based on economic populism and universal programs. William Julius Wilson does not have all the answers, but the prominence and quality of his work have helped create space for social democratic ideas. □

Notes

[1] Michael B. Katz gives a balanced and fairly positive assessment of Wilson's work in *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare* (Pantheon, 1989). One of the most articulate defenders of Wilson's work was the late Michael Harrington. See *The Long Distance Runner* (Henry Holt, 1988).

[2] See Charles Willie, "Rebuttal to a Conservative Strategy for Reducing Poverty," *Policy Studies Review* (Summer, 1988); Stephen Steinberg, "Color Blindness: Left and Right," *New Politics* (Fall, 1989); Norman Fainstein, "The Underclass/Mismatch Hypothesis as an Explanation for Black Economic Deprivation," *Politics and Society* (15:4, 1986–87); and Charles Willie, *Caste and Class Controversy on Race and Poverty: Round Two of the Willie/Wilson Debate* (New York: 1989).

[3] Stephen Steinberg is a good representative of this position. In the Winter 1990 *New Politics* there is a lively exchange on Steinberg's piece among Robert Blauner, Philip Kasinitz, Susan MacGregor, Erol Rickets, Harold Cruse, and myself.

[4] For critiques that unfairly attack Wilson on this point, see Charles Willie, "The Inclining Significance of Race," *Society* (July/August, 1978), Joe R. Feagin, "The Continuing Significance of Race: Antiblack Discrimination in Public Places," *American Sociological Review* (Feb. 1991) and Alphonso Pinkney, *The Myth of Black Progress* (New York: 1984).

[5] See James R. Kluegel, "Trends in Whites' Explanations of the Black-White Gap in S.E.S.," *American Sociological Review* (Volume 55, No. 4, August 1990).

[6] Barbara Schmitter Heisler, "A Comparative Perspective on the Underclass: Questions of Urban Poverty, Race and Citizenship," *Theory and Society* (August 1991).

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Lee Siegel

RUSSIAN JEWS, AFRICAN AMERICANS

A meeting was called a couple of months ago at the not-for-profit Jewish agency where I've taught English as a second language (ESL) on and off for several years to recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The administrators of the agency's ESL division had decided that the problem of racism among the immigrants should be addressed somehow. The nearly forty teachers on the evening shift were divided up into three groups according to the language level we were teaching. I entered an empty classroom with about fifteen other instructors who taught advanced levels.

As the supervisor—I'll call her Deborah—handed around questionnaires that asked us to write down our reactions to Russian-Jewish prejudice against African Americans, I wondered whether the incidence of prejudice among immigrants was rising at all. Or was it that a new mean-spiritedness in America, along with an alarmist and sometimes equally mean-spirited response to it, had made an inevitable if ugly part of immigrant life appear more significant than it was? It seemed to me that evening that the question—for African Americans no less than for immigrants—was whether prejudice could exist without hatred or the wish to do harm. Immigrants are not colonizers, after all. Many immigrants—especially the Russian-Jewish immigrants—uproot their lives and journey to a foreign land in hopes of being colonized. They fight to be taken prisoner by new values. For a minority of the Russian Jews I have taught and known, their prejudice, violent and intractable, might someday result in a matter for the police. A larger number have no serious prejudices at all. Most have an antipathy, in varying degrees, toward African Americans, as well as toward other less vulnerable, but still marginal groups. Aspiring to be positively appropriated, so to speak, by their adopted land, they are hypersensitive to the possibility that they might end up as just plain victims, at the bottom of the social scale. An anxious prejudice against a marginal group, one which they perceive to be beneath them, is like a dirty wind that suspends them over the social abyss whenever they imagine a plunge downward. At the same time, the force of prejudice perversely sustains them as they walk the thin line between healthy assimilation and the dissolution of their identity.

The teachers at the meeting about racism that night came out of a variety of circumstances, though everyone was white, and nearly everyone hailed from the upper-middle class. Professional ESL teachers work for the agency, but so do painters, writers, composers, actors, cabaret singers, photographers, playwrights and graduate students. All of us were grateful for the relatively easy money.

Deborah began by asking us for examples of racial prejudice among the clients. All the teachers had stories. Some of the responses to blacks were shocking. African Americans were "monkeys" and "animals." An insecure young man from St. Petersburg argued that black craniums were smaller than the average human cranium—a Jew saying this! A man from Kiev insisted that a group of black teenage girls he had seen on the train were not communicating in a human language. Black English, in fact, was the most popular target of Russian-Jewish scorn. Conversations, especially over the phone, between black caseworkers in the welfare office and Russians caused the greatest anger. Having spent years waiting in line in the former Soviet Union, the Russians could not understand why their taking seven minutes to finish a sentence should drive black municipal employees into a frenzy.

The Russians shook their heads when recounting these experiences. "Impolite," they said softly. It was a favorite and richly nuanced word among them,

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which they applied generally to American life. Using it partly consoled these timidly aggressive people for not yet being able to partake in the American aggressiveness that swirled everywhere around them. When they applied the term to describe black conduct, however, they meant the breakdown of order: "impoliteness" represented the tip of violence, chaos, destruction. Many Russians still fused memories of the footage the Soviet regime had shown over and over again of Watts and Detroit and Newark burning with their fears of the dangerous neighborhoods they currently lived in. The Soviet regime had cynically aimed to heroicize blacks as rebels against capitalism's depredations; instead it had defined blacks the way a bigot contrives to mentally portray the object of prejudice: as humanity flattened into quantity by an inescapable condition. These lingering mental images had at least three results. One was to cause African Americans to be instant targets to any Russian craving a compensatory dislike. Another was to produce the impression that blacks were a kind of communist fifth column carrying on the revolution in American cities through civil disorder, thus tempting the Russians to extend their dislike of the system that had failed them to Americans who to a great degree had been failed by their own system.

As the last permutation in this chain of preconceived notions, though, many Russians seemed not to dislike blacks so much as to fear the dysfunctional social and political mechanisms that made them, in immigrant eyes, "black," that is, economically disenfranchised. Vladimir, the insecure young man from St. Petersburg with the theory of racial intelligence, one day described the trouble he had encountered in finding a place to live. He had unfortunately mistranslated the word "unoccupied" from the Russian, and when he called the numbers he had gotten out of the newspaper, he asked for a "free" apartment. Whoever answered immediately hung up. Anticipating mysterious and insuperable difficulties during his first months in America, he never called back. It took him four months to find a small studio in Queens. His new landlords were a sympathetic middle-class black family who took pity on him and invited him to eat dinner with them the first evening he came to look at the apartment. He told this story on himself red-faced, yet relishing the mastery of telling it well, to the almost uncontrolled hilarity of the other Russians. After class, he solemnly expounded to me that only poor blacks had small craniums, not the comfortable family with the respectable house whose success demonstrated their intelligence. He himself had wanted to be a dentist in the Soviet Union, he said. The fear haunted him that he wouldn't have enough money to go to school and that he would end up as a clerk somewhere. I asked him if he really thought poor blacks were less intelligent than other people. "All poor people are less intelligent than other people," he answered, grabbing my arm and shouting at me.

People were telling anecdotes at the teachers' meeting, repeating the ugly stories, some of them mimicking Russian accents or imitating their grammatical mistakes. A feeling filled the air that as diverse a group as we were, we shared a common attitude of decency. Though most of the teachers had a strong empathy for the Russians, no one could hide his or her indignation. Didn't these people know what had been slowly tearing America apart for two hundred years? Didn't these newcomers realize that in a nation crowded with so many different groups, tolerance was as necessary for social cohesion as the right usage of prepositions was for communication?

There was an unspoken sentiment in the room that those Russians who couldn't learn to speak the language of tolerance should go back to where they came from. This emotion rapidly began to bind the teachers together. Proposals for teaching racial sensitivity were exuberantly offered. Most of the suggestions that I heard had to do with encouraging the Russians to see themselves in the "Other." The main idea was that demonstrating to these Russian Jews the similarity between their situation as "niggers" in the former Soviet Union (FSU) and the nightmare of being black in America might expand their sympathetic capability. Most Russian Jews, however, didn't need to be reminded of their status in the FSU, since their encounters with African Americans plagued them with a struggle between an instinctive sympathy on the one hand and a self-recognition that filled them with terror on the other.

Nevertheless, Deborah closed on a cheery note and urged us to make clear to the Russians—who had given up their old lives partly because of all the good things they had heard about the First Amendment—that you can't say whatever you want in America.

The meeting was over. The teachers left the room in haste, everyone going their separate ways as usual, their bags bulging, their arms full, migrating to another job, to another relationship, to the coast of another hopeful project, if nothing else then to the shore of a blissfully forgetful sleep.

A week later, my upper-level class of seventeen

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people voted in a classroom exercise to allow Haitian refugees into this country. One woman from Odessa named Irina, however, squat and solid with tender eyes, who had been four months in America with her husband and two sons—her future! her hope!—tried to abstain. Her purse had been snatched by a gang of black teenagers (who had little future and little hope and whose families had probably been here for generations) and she was not about to increase the odds against her. Her anger and hurt had been moving when she told the story; and the Russians had shifted uncomfortably in their seats, as they always did at the mention of crime or violence.

Now sixteen hands waved around her in an affirmative vote. On either side of her, I imagined seeing her past and a possible future, the brutal manipulation of collective instincts that had doomed Russia, and a sense of collective responsibility that could help save America. I had no idea of what she was thinking. But I certainly was not going to tell her what to think. The hands continued to be held high, directed upward. In the end, Irina shrugged and put her arm up in the air along with everyone else. □

Sonia Vlahov

THE DRUG PRICE CONTROVERSY

President Clinton holds that pharmaceutical companies are overcharging patients for their medicines and that price controls are needed to stop the abuse. So far, it appears that Clinton may be more successful than Bush in bringing his own brand of drug barons to heel.

Which is not to say that an oversized and pugnacious pharmaceutical industry is sinking into a sea of mea culpas. But companies are showing signs of bendng under public criticism. A few are seeking to develop voluntary price controls. Others are scrambling to protect profits and privileges. When the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) recently published a 360-page tome on drug costs and profits, seven companies, calling themselves Rx Partners and representing some of the industry's true giants, countered with a two-million-dollar, ninety-day public relations blitz intended to persuade Congress and the people of their fair pricing policies. The Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PMA), a 112–member consortium, is showering seven million dollars on the same cause.

Certain facts are not in dispute. Companies admit that price increases for existing drugs have topped inflation and that the cost of many new and innovative medicines can be astronomical. But beyond that, consensus crumbles under a barrage of half truths and contradictory statistics.

Simply to conclude that the pharmaceutical industry is rapacious in its pricing policies is to abdicate all responsibility for understanding the complex entity that is half science laboratory, half marketing machine. Yet to accept its claims that drugs are fairly priced is to elevate naiveté to an art form.

Pharmaceutical firms justify drug prices as cost effective, pointing out that modern medicines can obviate the need for expensive operations, hospitalizations, or psychotherapy. Although there's truth to that claim, the industry can be disingenuous in pressing the point. In its position paper on prices and profits, for example, the PMA notes that drugs available by prescription (average annual cost, $1,000) are as effective as bypass surgery (average cost, $40,000) in preventing heart attacks. Yet it fails to say that drugs don't prevent surgery so much as postpone it. The only sure way to escape the scalpel is to reverse atherosclerosis, the disease that clogs the arteries. Drugs can rarely do this. Thus, the most cost-effective approach to artery disease remains prevention, which should start in childhood, not drug therapy, which is usually life long.

The PMA's line on cost effectiveness contains other suspicious statements. Never does it reveal, for example, that the data used to demonstrate the cost effectiveness of newer (read "more expensive") versus older (read "cheaper") drugs derive mostly from industry-funded research. Some of the academics hired to perform the analyses assert that companies often bias the findings—by funding only those projects likely to yield favorable data, withdrawing support as soon as negative results emerge, releasing only favorable data for analysis, and seeking to control the content and use of the final report, including the right to have it published. Academics blame these practices on marketing personnel, who view economic analyses as a sales tool and, unlike scientists and researchers, make the exigencies of the marketplace—not the ethics of research methodology—their Holy Grail.

The most mindless of the best-buy arguments holds that although prices may be steep, prescription medicines account for only 7 percent of our annual health care bill. Thus, to impose price controls would hardly make a dent in the bottom line. Maybe, but that kind of thinking begs the question—

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which is whether or not individual drug prices are reasonable.

The industry's biggest gun is the claim that research and development (R&D) costs have skyrocketed in recent years. If you limit our profits, cry the drug makers, you'll squelch R&D and halt the output of innovative medicines.

In its recent report on the industry,* the OTA fully acknowledges that pharmaceutical R&D has grown more costly in recent years. Owing to rapid-fire changes in science and technology, drug discovery now depends more on biomedical research than on chance clinical observations and refinements of folk remedies, on molecular biologists and geneticists than on organic chemists and pharmacologists, on super computers and DNA sequencers than on test tubes and centrifuges. Just how such changes will affect the prices of drugs now being developed—as well as potential profits—depends on whether they shorten or lengthen the R&D cycle, since a large part of R&D spending ties in to the long-term cost of capital and since returns can be gauged only years after investments are made. Drug prices will also depend on whether the new technologies and medicines require more or less clinical testing, and more or less review by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), two factors that affect the time it takes to get a drug to market.

Given these unknowns, R&D costs per drug are inherently unstable. This makes it difficult for companies to estimate future R&D outlays, and bolsters the incentive for high drug prices as a hedge against uncertainty. Another incentive is the fact that only one out of eight new compounds ever makes it to market. If a drug flounders early in the R&D process, relatively little money is lost. If it goes the distance but fails to get FDA approval, the unrecoverable investment can be huge. On average, it takes twelve years to bring a new drug to market, with three devoted to safety testing, six to patient testing, and two to three to FDA review.

While conceding these points, OTA still concludes that the profits from pharmaceutical R&D have more than offset the risks in recent years. It calculates that the drug industry realized 2 percent to 3 percent more in profits than other industries during the booming eighties. Early in the decade, surplus profits accounted for about 4.3 percent of the price of each new drug over its product life. Later on, new drugs entering the market made more from sales in constant dollars than had previously been the case—a fact Wall Street quickly noted. And as the potential for profits accelerated, so did industrywide investment in R&D, which rose 10 percent a year in constant dollars throughout the decade.

So in this respect the drug makers appear to be right: if profits stay high, new drug development keeps pace. What OTA trenchantly asks, however, is whether today's level of R&D investment and the drugs it spawns are inarguably worth their cost to society. To answer that, we need to know just how R&D monies are spent.

According to the PMA, the average R&D outlay per new drug is $231 million, measured in 1987 dollars. Using 1990 dollars, the OTA puts the after-tax cost at $194 million. The discrepancy stems partly from the industry's zeal in guarding its financial spreadsheets, leaving OTA to base its calculations on stale numbers and best-guess assumptions. Attempts by the General Accounting Office to audit companies under government contract have been defeated in decade-long court battles. Congress has the power to subpoena the desired financial data but has never seen fit to do so.

This makes it virtually impossible to determine just how R&D monies are allocated in the pursuit of new products: how much investment goes to "breakthrough" drugs, which treat diseases through entirely new therapeutic modes? And how much goes to so-called "me-too," or imitative, drugs? Me-toos are refinements of breakthrough drugs and, in the best of all possible worlds, can offer advantages in clinical efficacy, side effects, ease of use, or even cost. In the world as it is, some are simply gate-crashers at the feast of monopoly profits.

The issue of me-too drugs is germane to understanding what competition, that capitalist mantra of the eighties, really means to the pharmaceutical industry. Of the ninety drugs that got FDA approval last year, 40 percent were me-toos. How many were merely more expensive versions of older, cheaper, and equally effective drugs is anybody's guess. Yet this much is clear: when a market is huge—as it is, say, in hypertension or high blood cholesterol—firms will devote big bucks to developing and promoting me-too drugs.

More and more, the fight for market share has taken some dubious, if not downright unethical, turns. Direct marketing to consumers, prepackaged "news" stories from PR firms, even television

* The OTA report—*Pharmaceutical R&D: Costs, Risks and Rewards*, OTA-H-522—was published in Washington, DC, by the U.S. Government Printing Office in February 1993. It can be obtained for $18 by writing to the Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954. Orders can also be placed by telephone (202-783-3238) or fax (202-512-2250).

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programs for physician cable networks (known to be watched by the public)—all are attempts to have patients push their doctors to treat such-and-such condition or prescribe such-and-such drug. These gambits complement the many programs aimed directly at physicians. One favorite is to underwrite educational symposia for doctors and then pay ghostwriters to prepare clinical papers on the material presented. Although there is nothing factually wrong with the published papers, they can selectively present information. And when reams of them appear on the same subject, citing mostly the same data, the effect is to bias the literature doctors rely on to keep abreast of medical developments.

FDA chief David Kessler has taken steps to curb these abuses. Still, the money lavished on marketing and promotion, which account for the "indirect" cost of drug development, equals the national debt of some small countries. One health care economist estimates that in 1991 pharmaceutical firms spent $1 billion more on promotion than on R&D. The PMA, in yet another slippery statement, proudly notes that drug firms will devote 16.7 percent of their budgets to R&D this year, or about four times more than other types of industries. What it fails to mention is that another 20 percent will go to promotion, which is about two to ten times the amount that most consumer-based industries spend.

Assuming that the pharmaceutical industry is engaged in profiteering, Clinton will look the hero if he can bring it into line. Drug makers aren't popular, notes a recent *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll, which found that only 18 percent of Americans regard them favorably. Public discontent certainly has its sources—such as the 100 percent to 150 percent price hikes levied on some older medicines during the 1980s, the astronomical cost of the newer biotech products, or the attempts of a few firms to charge premium prices for drugs discovered and developed with public funds. The worst of these offenses was committed by Burroughs Wellcome in 1987 when it sought to charge $10,000 a year for AZT, the first anti-AIDS medicine. As justification, the company cited development costs and the need to plow back profits into more research. Yet AZT had been developed by scientists at the National Institutes of Health at taxpayer expense. Public outcry forced the price of AZT down to $2,000 a year, but the taint of greed stuck.

To many in the drug industry, it's bad press and not high prices that's really behind their current woes. Rx Partners, says a spokeswoman, is "trying to get out the word, contrary to criticism, of the good this industry does." The PMA is touting the various program that companies have for "indigent patient assistance."

But now there's Clinton, and for once real action, if not real change, may be at hand. Already, calls for mandatory price controls and curbs on promotional excesses have elicited more than PR pap from some quarters. As of this writing, thirteen firms with over 40 percent of all U.S. prescription drug sales have pledged to hold future price rises to the rate of inflation. One of the biggest, Merck & Co. Inc., has outlined a price control program that could save $9 billion in prescription drug costs over three years if everyone signs on. Among the proposals is one to roll back previous price hikes that exceeded inflation and to funnel such savings into a government fund for improving access to health care.

The pharmaceutical industry may rant about runaway R&D costs, whine that reduced profits will kill innovative drug development, and carp about competition from generic drugs and lost patent protection, but little by little it's being made to play ball. □

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JERRY MONACO

A DEMENTED MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

This has been a season of demented men. They flicker on the movie screen, igniting our emotions, and then leave us in darkness. Rarely do they touch the better parts of our nature. Mostly they engender fear and teach violence as a solution to the problems of society.

The demented man has a long tradition in the cinema. But recently there has been a change in how such men are portrayed on screen. In the past the demented man was someone who destroyed order: an outsider, a madman, a criminal, a sadist, or literally a monster. In the seventies and early eighties, he became a hero. The new demented man was a rogue cop or vigilante: a person who used unconventional means to enforce "law and order." These newer movies seemed to recommend that Richard Nixon's "silent majority" should take up arms to overthrow the Warren Court's concept of due process. This was made explicit in a film where Sylvester Stallone pours gasoline on a group of criminals and incinerates them while reciting their Miranda rights. The vigilante films were part of an anti-sixties backlash, but they were also an updating of a Western genre—the lone gunfighter or sheriff who takes the law into his own hands to clear the town of outlaws. The vigilante film transferred the lone gunfighter to a modern urban setting, but he was no longer fighting for order against the criminal elements—he was rebelling against the liberal society.

The demented man has become upwardly mobile. No longer an outsider, he has moved into the middle class. Or more accurately, the middle class is falling down to meet him.

In the movie *Falling Down* Michael Douglas plays a laid-off defense industry engineer. He's stuck in a traffic jam and he's frustrated with life, mad as hell and he's not going to take it anymore. He has worked hard and played by the rules, and he has nothing to show for it. In his crew cut, horn-rimmed glasses, and a plastic pocket protector, Douglas looks the part of a down-and-out organization man. In the fifties this character would have been the man in the grey flannel suit; in the nineties he's a man about to go on a shooting spree. He abandons his car and walks into one of those inner-city neighborhoods the interstates were designed to bypass. He wants to make a telephone call to his ex-wife. He walks into a Korean grocery store, but the man behind the counter won't give him change without a purchase; he buys a soda and gets only a nickel back. Realizing he doesn't have enough change to make the call he flies into a rage and smashes everything in the store with a baseball bat he took from the store clerk. "How much does this cost?" he asks the clerk. "That's too much," he yells. "Just standing up for my rights as a consumer," he says as he smashes another item. At this line the audience in my theater cheered and laughed as if on cue.

Falling Down endeavors to be a vigilante film turned inside out. All pernicious intent is denied by the filmmakers, but in truth they want to have it both ways. To read the statements of director Joel Schumacher and the screenwriter Ebbe Roe Smith one would think that the film is social criticism at its best: our society frustrates hard-working middle-class guys and this film tells the story of one such man at the breaking point. Smith probably believed that his screenplay would tap into nineties exasperation the way Paddy Chayevsky's literate satire *Network* tapped into seventies alienation.

In reality *Falling Down* is not social criticism but a simple revenge fantasy. Perhaps the filmmakers merely intended to represent the worldview of a paranoid unemployed white man rather than endorse it, but it's hard to tell the difference. When Michael Douglas screams at the Korean store clerk, "You come to my country, you should learn my language," the people around me cheered.

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Falling Down is a manipulative film: all the cues are mechanically written into the script, and space is left in the dialogue for the appropriate audience response. Many of the best Hollywood films of the forties and fifties can be viewed as psychoanalytic passion plays, with pop-Freudianism as the ruling theology. Today, Hollywood filmmakers have regressed; they think they can rule our passions with cheap applications of stimulus-response theory. *Falling Down* is an essay in audience manipulation, but this is typical of many Hollywood movies. Its real interest lies elsewhere.

The current tendency in Hollywood is to project middle-class fears of downward mobility onto the screen. Even a conventional Hollywood product such as *Indecent Proposal* does this in its own way. *Falling Down* makes the assumption explicit. Even the title of the movie is reminiscent of Barbara Ehrenreich's *Fear of Falling*, a book about middle-class anxiety and downward mobility. (It would be interesting to know if the market researchers in Hollywood have read it.) We can expect this trend to continue. Let us hope that future movies are not as mean spirited as this one.

It is no coincidence that Clint Eastwood, with his background in the Westerns, defined the urban vigilante genre with his Dirty Harry movies: Eastwood was consciously reworking the Western. So it is appropriate that he should now bring the genre full circle.

In *Unforgiven* Eastwood plays an ex-gunfighter who found a woman to make him true and righteous. The woman gave him religion and made him give up drink and killing. But things have gone wrong. The wife has died and the farm is failing. After a prostitute is slashed in the face by two customers, her co-workers offer a reward for their murder, and Eastwood picks up his guns once more to collect it.

There is nothing surprising in this movie except the beauty of its slow pacing. Everything is predictable down to the fact that the Eastwood character starts guzzling whiskey (like Popeye with his can of spinach) just before the climactic gunfight. The Eastwood character begins the movie looking like a tightly wound religious fanatic and ends it as a cool killing machine; the transformation is frightening.

Why does *Unforgiven* have a reputation as a revisionist Western? The movie goes to great lengths to show murder as unheroic: one man lingers on in dying for an excruciatingly long time; another is shot while he is in the outhouse. The Kid who rides with Eastwood romanticizes murder and violence and brags about all the people he has killed, but in the end is so sick with the bloody reality that he admits that he never killed anybody before. The writer who has romanticized the West in his stories discovers that all his tales are wrong. The sheriff, played by Gene Hackman, runs the town as a petty dictatorship. Until the very end the structure of the narrative is a series of near comic disillusionments; there is no justice, no retribution that can heal society.

On one level *Unforgiven* seems to say that violence solves nothing: murderers and lawmen, the ministers of vengeance and pursuit, are equally unjust. The characters don't even act from self-interest but from a need to imprint their will on the world through violence. In the end the Eastwood character walks into the saloon and coolly, methodically guns down the sheriff and all of his deputies; they blaze away at him but it has no effect. Earlier the sheriff explained to the writer that the man who has no fear, who maintains his cool, will win even against superior numbers. The Eastwood character's explanation to the writer is simpler: "I've always been lucky in killing."

Unforgiven is a powerful film, but its reputation as a revisionist Western is specious. On the surface the argument of the movie is that the legends of Western gunfighters were created by popular writers of "true" fiction. The same argument was made more cogently thirty years ago in John Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence*. Ford's movie, more than Eastwood's, deromanticizes the gunfighter by showing how the legends are created to serve political ends. Ford also presents a rational argument for representative democracy and against frontier violence. In *Unforgiven* the only alternative to free-lance violence is the violence of petty dictatorship. This worldview is consistent with Eastwood's previous films.

What makes *Unforgiven* different from earlier Westerns is its complete lack of morality: Good does not win out over evil because there is no good or evil. Human events occur as if part of the natural order. (This is emphasized by the cinematography and the framing of the landscape.) What makes the movie frightening is the psychological power violence holds for the characters, as if violence itself is the only explanation the characters need for their actions. As a result of the violence he endures and delivers the Eastwood character undergoes a transformation that can only be called spiritual. In the end the audience identifies with the fierce power of Eastwood's lone gunman. There is nothing revisionist in this. □

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E.P. Thompson

THE MAKING OF A RULING CLASS

BRITONS: FORGING THE NATION 1707–1837, by Linda Colley. Yale University Press, 1992. 430 pp. $35.

King Henry: Methinks I could not die anywhere so contented as in the king's company, his cause being just, and his quarrel honorable.
Michael Williams: That's more than we know.

—William Shakespeare
Henry the Fifth, Act IV, Scene 1

Since I am going to argue with some parts of this book, let me say at once that it is a significant study and well deserves the praise with which it has been received. Linda Colley writes with clarity and grace—and how much is won by these uncommon virtues! She also has a capacity for historical generalization that puts her into the front rank among her contemporaries. She has also been well served, in most respects, by her publisher, who has allowed her a multitude of illustrations—perhaps one to every five or six pages of text. These are evocative and well selected, even though some require a magnifying glass to understand (but why not?). Professor Colley has an alias as director of the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale, and she has clearly put her time there to good use. Some of the illustrations are extraordinarily good, such as Romney's "Eton leaving portrait" of the young Charles Grey, and very many will be new to most readers. The one respect in which the publisher fails is in putting the notes at the end of the book instead of at the foot of the page. This is to wreck a historical work, but I will not argue that familiar case over again. The directors of a prestigious academic press should be ashamed.

Britons is an interpretive essay and not a chronological study. Colley has an enviable command of the secondary sources published in the past fifteen years, although her recourse to primary evidence is less fluent. Her thesis is that it was in the eighteenth century that English, Welsh, and Scots became a British nation, and that a shared Protestantism facilitated this and gave to this junction an identity. This in turn was enforced by a century and more of wars and confrontations with the French "Other," a Catholic Other that was also a prime competitor in trade and empire. The rivalry with France and, to a lesser degree, with another Catholic power, Spain, consolidated the British nation and pointed out the Jacobite and then the "Jacobin" oppositions as treasonable.

War was the formative and binding British experience of the eighteenth century (her thesis continues) and this had unplanned and unintended consequences, or what Pasternak once called "the consequences of consequences." For the men, service in the armed forces educated them not only in patriotism but also in citizenship—they returned after the Napoleonic Wars to demand political rights. Although the culture of loyalism in the same period was profoundly antifeminist, the widespread participation of women in patriotic activities and in support of the armed forces provided them with education in self-organization and with a new sense of public space. At the apex of this loyal new nation of Britons was the monarchy, and George III's long reign culminated in his "apotheosis," as the king was celebrated with more and more elaborate ceremony. In a few suggestive asides Colley hints that today, in the absence of an enemy Other and with the decline of Protestantism, the British nation may be about to fall apart.

It is a persuasive argument, which hangs together well. But some parts of it are presented too confidently, and I am sure that Colley would prefer to be challenged rather than receive facile assent. In

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any interpretive essay the author tends to select evidence that confirms the interpretation and to neglect whatever is inconvenient. I am sure that I have been guilty of this sometimes myself. In this case there is no micrometer that will measure degrees of patriotism or loyalism. Colley is able to make convincing soundings here and there. Her general thesis about Protestantism will scarcely be challenged, and she can confirm it with reference to the Gordon Riots (1780), sparked off in large part by crowd hostility to the relief of disabilities on Catholics; this disposition continued to be evidenced by the volume of petitions against Catholic emancipation in 1829. However, in using "Protestantism" as a blanket term she has little to say about the fact that that extraordinary hybrid creature, the Church of England, balanced itself between two opponents, the Catholics and the Dissenters (who also were subject to limitations on their civic rights). The ensuing divisions were more significant than her somewhat complacent account of Protestantism suggests.

The difficulty of interpretive selectivity may be illustrated with reference to two other recent books that deal with the British people—or some British people—in the same period. One, by a Conservative peer and sound historical scholar, Ian Gilmour, is entitled *Riot, Risings and Revolution: Governance and Violence in 18th Century England*. This chronicles and analyzes the repeated confrontation between a turbulent crowd and the authorities that punctuated the entire century. Another is the striking work by a North American Marxist, Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged*, which examines "from below" the short life experience of many of those who ended up on the Tyburn gallows; quite a few of these had served in the armed forces or at sea in defending and extending the British empire. Taking these books with Colley's, each of them might be describing different "Britons." This also indicates some of the evidence that Linda Colley hurries past with averted eyes.

Despite her high intelligence and liberal disposition she has written a "top-down" history, flattering to a conservative self-image of Britons. One is often impelled to ask: *which* Britons? How far has she written a thesis on the making of the British ruling class, and how far is she entitled to incorporate the common people into the same thesis? The first thesis is undoubtedly true, and she shows it to be so. As to how far the common people participated in this new loyal British consensus, I remain skeptical. As Michael Williams said, when King Hal wandered incognito among his troops on the eve of the battle of Agincourt, "That's more than we know."

I have been trying for much of my life to find out, but I remain an agnostic. The answer probably varied according to persons and places, times and contexts. The disposition of the majority of Britons was probably ambivalent. Colley makes her argument easier by laying great stress upon the papers of the Volunteers, those part-time civil defense forces that were raised to meet a French invasion, in 1797–1800 and again in 1803–08. Inevitably such evidence will tend to confirm a loyalist thesis. But in doing so she passes by the considerable archive of "Home Office Papers"—that is, the extensive correspondence between anxious magistrates and the Home Office. This tells a very different story, of popular disaffection and class alienation, especially between 1797 and 1803, years of severe food shortage and soaring prices, of discontent against taxes (which extended to the middling orders), of mutiny in the Navy, insurrection in Ireland, and war weariness that may have compelled government to accept the brief Peace of Amiens. This evidence has been drawn upon extensively in two books by Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces* and *Insurrection*. If one were to discount all this testimony, one would have to conclude that the British ruling class was made up of paranoiacs and fools, which it was not.

The evidence of Volunteers is not as unequivocal as might be supposed. Those who volunteered were exempted from service as regulars. They might serve only in their immediate vicinity and choose preferred (non-military) roles such as wagoners or drovers. Colley makes much of their numbers, but does not tell us much about what they did. Most of the yeomanry were subgentry or their clients and tenants, and one of the things that many of them did was to join or form fox hunts, where they could ride about in a manly way and signal their loyalism by calling the unfortunate creature whom they pursued "Charlie," after the radical and propeace Whig leader, Charles James Fox. (To this day English fox-hunters call the fox "Charlie," although few know why.)

They also, as Colley acknowledges, dressed up in uniform, rode around in macho postures, and were sometimes employed against crowds who were rioting against the high price of bread; one anonymous letter writer remarked that "we dont care a Dam for them fellows that Call Themselves Gentlemen Soldiers But in our opinion they Look moore like Monkeys Riding on Bears. . . . " Nor need their loyalty be always assumed. We know that some reformers joined the Volunteers in order to get

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hold of arms. In 1801 sensationally seditious anonymous letters were circulating in a corner of Somerset:

> Then raise yr drooping spirits up
> Nor starve by Pitt's decree
> Fix up the sacred Guillotine
> Proclaim—French liberty!

The authorities, by comparing handwriting, identified the suspected author of these letters as a sergeant in the Volunteers. (This does not mean that we must take those sentiments at their face value, for in an old popular tradition, which I have called "counter-theater," the discontented chose the vocabulary—Jacobite or Jacobin—most likely to alarm the authorities).

William Cobbett, himself a former regular soldier who had not yet crossed to the side of the reformers, utterly despised the Volunteers. In 1804 he described the Manchester Volunteers as "a parcel of empty coxcombs of manufacturers, whom the imbecility of government had dressed up in swords and red coats." No doubt if the French had invaded some of them might have given a better account of themselves. But the French did not, so the valor and loyalty of the Volunteers must remain a hypothesis. One must recall that the most triumphant engagement of their direct successors took place after the wars, and was *against* Britons, when these solicitor's clerks, dancing masters and wine-merchants in fancy dress rode down the Lancashire working people of both sexes who were demonstrating for political reform, in the "battle" of "Peterloo."

My examples are more biased than are Colley's. There is no way of telling how many shared the views of Jonathan Panther, a London coachmaker, who was indicted for seditious libel in August 1803, for saying "it is a war of the rich men against the most sober, Honest and Industrious part of the people of this nation, who have always been the principal support of the rich. . . . " We have nothing like the remarkable testimonies of liberated slaves now presented by Ira Berlin and his colleagues in *Free at Last*. If we should treat with respect Colley's informed hunch (for it is not much more) as to British loyalism, then I may be allowed to offer my own different hunch. I think that there was a marked change in popular responses between the first and second French Wars. In the first there was widespread disaffection, of the Jonathan Panther kind, and even some sympathy with the French. In the second war—the truly "Napoleonic War"—there was a powerful surge toward a national patriotic and anti-Gallican consensus. Undoubtedly this was stimulated from above, but it met with a strong response as French invasion forces threatened the British coast, and it came to a climax in the famous naval victory of Trafalgar.

At any time between 1803 and about 1810 the Colley thesis is probably right. There was a political element in this change also. These years were the very nadir of any British "Jacobin" enthusiasm. The earnest follower of Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* was utterly turned off France by French betrayal of revolutionary principles—by the elevation of Napoleon as First Consul and then as Emperor, by the re-establishment of hierarchy and of slavery, by French aggression and aggrandizement in Europe. Most of those middle-class reformers, as well as working-class Painites who had been disaffected in the first French war, became ardent anti-Gallicans in the second. Wordsworth, who was surveilled as a suspected Jacobin in 1797, was drilling with the Grassmere Volunteers in 1803. John Thelwall, the leading reformer of the 1790s, was writing an ode on the death of Admiral Nelson in 1805.

All this made a difference. Such persons were the potential leaders of an alternative Britain. People can swing swiftly between poles when their leaders shift. But even loud patriotism must be inspected carefully for its nuances, its authenticity and also its ego trips. Whole cart loads of patriotic ballads came off the presses in those years. Most of them were songs that one suspects were never sung, such as one in praise of the Royal Manchester Volunteers to the tune of "Our Cannon Balls, and Bumshells":

> You'll have a Band of Music Boys,
> Your Loyal Hearts to cheer,
> A dashing sword, Yourself to guard,
> Roast Beef, and British Beer;
> Your head adorned with Ribbons Blue,
> And in each Arm, A WENCH;
> And all the work you have to do,
> Will be to beat the French.
>
> CHORUS
>
> In the Manchester Volunteers,
> Haste, Britons, Haste to go,
> Along with Captain Delhoste,
> To fight the Gallic foe.

(Perhaps the Volunteers were somewhat encumbered in their military duties by the wenches on their arms, which may be why the "dashing sword" was reserved for wielding against the unarmed handloom weavers and cotton spinners on the field of Peterloo.) There were also merry ballads that were

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anti-Gallican *tout court*. Thus one, called "Jolly Jack of Dover," is supposed to be spoken by a ferryman who brought emigrants across from Calais:

I brought o'er a Milliner, who said her name was Nancy.
She said she had some fringes that wou'ld arouse my fancy;
But I said avast there, my dear, I am not so eager,
Nor so tir'd of English meat to long for your soup meagre.

CHORUS

O! no, the Devil a bit with jolly Jack of Dover,
None of your murd'ring Frenchmen to England shall come over.

As with all texts in popular culture, then as now, it is not easy to decide whether such provided texts reveal the thoughts of their readers. But the reader or the viewer today at least must choose to buy the rubbish or to turn on the knob, whereas bundles of these masterpieces were, like Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts*, bought in bulk by the gentry and their ladies to be sent down to the servants' quarters or distributed to the poor. Colley at one point high-mindedly rebukes unnamed historians for "confusing patriotism with simple conservatism, or smothering it with damning and dismissive references to chauvinism and jingoism." The point is valid, but she would be more persuasive if she allowed her readers to learn that some Volunteer patriotism *was* humbug and that chauvinism and jingoism were among its components. She insists that patriotism "requires flexible, sensitive and above all, imaginative reconstruction." Yes, but if such ballads as I have quoted—and they were numerous—did not represent chauvinistic humbug, then, damn, what does? And can a sensitive and imaginative reconstruction succeed that holds its hand over this kind of inconvenient evidence?

This is not to reject Colley's theses but to seek to qualify them. If they are 100 percent correct then my old study, *The Making of the English Working Class*, must be wrong. For I argued there, and elsewhere, that a significant part of the British experience in these years was the formation of the structures, oppositions, and contradictory cultures of "class." "Class" was perhaps overworked in the 1960s and 1970s, and it has become merely boring. It is a concept long past its sell-by date. Colley appears to share the prevalent view and evades any full discussion of the alienation, in the eighteenth century, between patricians and plebs, and in the early nineteenth century between aristocracy, the middle class, and the emergent working class. But I am not ready to capitulate. I cannot find one univocal nation of "Britons." I am not convinced as to the "apotheosis" of George III; I find in the sources some examples of conciliated crowds shouting "God Save the King," but this is a ritualized concession to loyalism and it rarely focused upon the royal person. (By contrast disloyalty could focus sensationally on the person of George IV in the Queen Caroline agitation.) I consider that Colley much overstates—and thereby weakens—her case by asserting that "training in arms under the auspices of the state . . . was the most common collective working-class experience in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" and more common than the "experience of work." (I wonder if it was even more common than being a supplicant for the Poor Law?) And I consider that the common people were not always as stupid as she appears to suppose: at one point she remarks approvingly of the cult of monarchy under George III that "it was more securely at one with the politics of unreason and emotionalism." As Americans may remember.

This leads into another quarrel with which I must deal more briefly. There is a Whiggish tone to some of Colley's argument—"the gradual but relentless shift of opinion"—that sometimes suggests that all came about in a determined way, and without sharp conflict or purposive agency. I will take as an example her treatment of feminism in the 1790s. Colley says that the revelations about her private life after her death in 1797 "savagely limited [Wollstonecraft's] influence." That is about all that we hear of the feminist impulse of the 1790s: it was "savagely limited" by an unfortunate contingency. It is perfectly true that William Godwin's posthumous *Memoir* of Wollstonecraft was tactless and sadly inopportune. But what savagely limited and indeed defeated the cause of the *Rights of Woman* was the unprecedentedly strident and brutal attack upon them, from such quarters as the *Anti-Jacobin*, and the loyalist equation of Wollstonecraft and feminism with promiscuity and potential treason:

Fierce passion's slave, she veer'd with every gust,
Love, Rights and Wrongs, Philosophy, and Lust.

The sheer volume and universality of this anti-Jacobinism (the British precursor of McCarthyism) is scarcely glimpsed in *Britons*, and yet it was the inseparable obverse of loyalism. It can be seen, for

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example, in a House of Lords debate in 1798 on a divorce bill. Lord Auckland said that such a bill "was better adapted to the proceedings before the municipality of Paris. [A loud cry of "Hear, hear!" from the Bishop of Rochester and others.]" The Bishop of Durham concurred:

> The French rulers, while they despaired of making any impression on us by force of arms, attempted a more subtle and alarming warfare, by endeavouring . . . to taint and undermine the morals of our ingenuous youth. They sent amongst us a number of female dancers, who, by the allurement of the most indecent attitudes, succeeded but too effectually in loosening and corrupting the moral feelings of the people.

And so on. There are mountains of such humbug, which contributed not only to halting but to reversing the feminist impulse. We often think of Dr. Bowdler, who gained fame by "bowdlerizing" Shakespeare's plays, as a "Victorian" figure, but he belongs—as do many features of the repression that we have come to know as "Victorianism"—to the anti-Jacobin repression of the 1800s.

All this did not just happen, in a Whiggish way. It was made to happen, by some men and women and against others. I am unimpressed by the argument, heard often today and even supported by some feminists, that Hannah More, the well-supported anti-Jacobin and anti-feminist polemicist, was in fact enlarging feminine space and expectations by becoming such a public figure. (Colley makes some portentous concessions to this view, and adds that More was the "first British woman ever to make a fortune with her pen, and this fact alone should warn us against seeing her simply as a conservative figure." With equal or more force one might say the same of Margaret Thatcher, the first British woman to become prime minister. But if More and Thatcher were not conservatives what are we to call them?)

On the other hand, there were some women and some men who stood up against the avalanche of state-sponsored anti-Jacobinism. And reformers, like royalists, could have their own ceremonies. Thus in the parliamentary elections of 1802 advanced reformers were elected in some constituencies with a wide franchise. Windham, the war minister and close ally of Pitt, was defeated in Norwich. And in Nottingham, where a reformer was elected, an over-excited magistrate sent to the Home Secretary a sensational account. The reformer had secured election with the support of a "lawless mob," and the ensuing triumphal procession "was done in a style unlike any thing ever before exhibited in this Country":

> The Goddess of Reason attended by four & twenty Virgins dress'd or rather half dress'd in white in the French fashion, followed by the Tree of Liberty and the tri-colour'd Flag; a Band of Music playing the Tune of "Millions be free" and the Multitude singing the words. . . .

In other accounts the Goddess of Reason was naked, although she was probably wearing a flesh-coloured garment. No wonder that a committee of the House of Commons solemnly declared the election to be invalid.

My point is not only that the evidence is difficult to read but that it is always evidence of *conflict*, of competing agencies, with the outcome undecided, and not of determined Whiggish evolution. Hannah More had the good will of the whole state and of much of the ruling class to propel her to fame and fortune, whereas the Nottingham Goddess of Reason was bound to be found, on enquiry, to be invalid. But that is no reason for historians to follow suit.

Perhaps we could compromise by saying that the truth lies somewhere between my view and Colley's? I am certainly not proposing that there was an almost-revolution in Britain in the 1790s. In my view—as I've said before—the only time when that was historical possibility was during the crisis leading up to the Reform Act of 1832, when the rulers were divided and when great sections of the middle and working classes were making common cause. I concur strongly with a note of Colley's in which she says that to discuss the strains of the 1790s "*primarily* in terms of the potential for revolution is unhelpful." But it still remains necessary to take the full measure of these strains to qualify the theses of *Britons*.

What all this is about may only be a matter of emphasis. Most of my points would be acknowledged by Colley, and indeed find some mention (if only marginally) in her carefully qualified argument. She may fairly respond that historians have written enough about riots and popular radicalism, and that her purpose is to mark out firmly the boundaries of national consensus within which all that took place. She does this superbly well, with controlled judgments and with abundant information. Her stimulating book will be, and deserves to be, influential. Instead of trying for some mid-way compromise, we might say that *both* views might be true. Not only were the British sometimes highly loyalist and sometimes decidedly not so, but also Colley's argument about the making of one British

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nation need not contradict arguments about the "Two Nations" of class. After all, English, Scottish and Welsh reformers and Chartists managed to work together, and the most prominent British Chartist leader, Feargus O'Connor, was an Irishman. There are times when the patriot must also be a revolutionary. And on that note I am willing to welcome this book and to call out "Pax!" □

David Montgomery

DISHING IT OUT

DISHING IT OUT: WAITRESSES AND THEIR UNIONS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, by Dorothy Sue Cobble. University of Illinois Press, 1991. 327 pp. $34.95 hb., $14.95 pb.

The decline of unions in the United States has led scholars and labor activists to ask about past forms of collective action by workers other than contractual worksite representation through governmentally certified bargaining agents. During the last two decades historians have devoted close attention to experiences with the empowerment of shop stewards, campaigns for a legal thirty-hour work week and universal social insurance, enterprise (or company) unionism, and the pre-Wagner Act practices of the Knights of Labor and of craft unions. This has resulted in a valuable discussion over whether the industrial unions that reshaped national life during the 1930s and 1940s provide the only, or the best, model for a future labor movement.

Dorothy Sue Cobble, an associate professor in Rutgers University's Institute of Management and Labor Relations, has addressed this question directly. "Could labor appeal to the growing female-dominated service work force," she asks, "or was it historically and irredeemably linked to the anchor of the blue-collar male worker?" A complete answer would require analysis of past and present unionism in health care, clerical work, and the public sector (where the rate of unionization is today considerably higher than it is in manufacturing). But Cobble has aimed our attention in another direction: food service. By 1970 more than 1,230,000 people earned their living by dispensing food and drink, and 92 percent of them were women. During the following decade, according to Emma Rothschild, "the *increase* in employment in eating and drinking places [was] greater than the total employment in the automobile and steel industries combined."

By the early 1950s one-quarter of the country's eating and drinking establishments were union shops. Of the 403,000 members in the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE), 45 percent were women. Moreover, since the 1910s women had been prominent among the union's officers and staff representatives.

The waitresses achieved this level of organization through craft unionism. The way they did it will astonish readers who associate craft uinionism simply with a white male aristocracy of labor. Waitresses' unions grew out of the occupational, gender, and racial demarcations that existed in restaurants at the dawn of this century. Before the late 1930s, waitress locals recruited only women and set out, in the words of Chicago leader Elizabeth Maloney, to make of their occupation "a real trade by which any girl might be proud of making her living." Training periods of up to six months were required for admission, technical schools improved members' skills, and union rules strictly defined the boundaries between a waitress's work and that of a cook, salad man, or bus boy. In Cleveland no union member could "make coffee, sweep or mop floors, wash silver or dishes, mirrors, windows or coffee urns, clean fruit, vegetables or make salads, put away or count silver." Union waitresses served food.

Union wage-and-hour standards were attached to the waitress, not to her place of work, and movement from job to job was commonplace. Union hiring halls dispatched members of proven competence to fill vacancies, union meetings disciplined those who violated standards of performance on the job (thus assuming much of the disciplinary enforcement exercised by employers elsewhere), and business agents equalized access to work among members, though they seldom challenged the dismissal of a worker from a particular job.

Through picketing and boycotts, waitresses enforced their demands for a closed shop and hiring through the union hall. These tactics secured continued union growth in many cities through the 1920s, when Prohibition generated remarkable growth in the restaurant trade (though Cobble devotes little attention to that epoch). These continued to be the major organizing weapons even after the Wagner Act was passed, with the sit-down strike added to their arsenal. After careful preparatory meetings, Detroit's Myra Wolfgang would enter an eating place and blow her famous whistle, bringing all work to an abrupt halt. During the thirties, socialist officials of HERE like Edward Flore and Hugo Ernst and communist leaders in New

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York's Local 6 tried to organize all occupations and races in hotels and restaurants and encouraged new recruits to join the same multi-craft locals. Their story reminds us how much organizing in the late 1930s did not resort to NLRB elections.

All this was classic craft union practice, and all was designed to secure the waitress respectful treatment, from employers, fellow workers, and customers alike. This familiar aspiration of trade unionists, Cobble writes, had a special meaning for women workers. "Respectability for women was intimately intertwined with sexual respectability," she writes. "For waitresses, respectability proved elusive because waiting work involved close personal interaction with male strangers in an environment laden with sexual overtones."

Long tenure in the occupation, shared northern European ancestry, and endless hours spent together on the job fostered the development of a distinctive work culture and helped make the union a surrogate family. As Cobble astutely observes, daily adversarial relations with men in the restaurants prepared waitresses for dealing with men in their international union, while the all-female locals provided union careers for women whose advancing age made it increasingly difficult to find the better waiting job. Unlike the women union leaders studied by historians in other occupations, the lives of women who became salaried officials of HERE were remarkably similar to those of the rank and file. Waitress leaders tended to run for office only after the age of thirty, and only 6 percent of them had never been married. The mixed-sex locals of other unions in later decades, though they often had women's committees, failed to produce such numerous and prominent officials of the international union.

Both the cohesive culture of the waitresses and the stringent demarcations of their craft rules reinforced racial exclusiveness in the world of food service. The pioneering locals of San Francisco, Seattle, and Butte rode to success through campaigns to drive Chinese and Japanese men out of the restaurants. The small number of black women (and men) enrolled in HERE were gathered into segregated locals, and most worked in establishments with African-American clientele. The many family-run establishments that catered to Asian-American, African-American, or Eastern European customers remained outside the union fold (and outside of Cobble's book). Officials of the international union threw their weight behind desegregation of jobs and of locals only in the late 1930s, and especially in the 1950s. Although the number of black waitresses in the United States increased by 253 percent between 1940 and 1960 (to 54,000), A. Philip Randolph included the hotel and restaurant locals of New York City in the list of unions he denounced for accommodating racial divisions of labor (or "color coding" of jobs) in a famous 1961 speech to the Negro American Labor Council.

Observations in every chapter force the reader to reconsider commonly accepted categories of historical analysis. Nowhere is this more clearly the case than in the relationship of waitress unions to the history of protective legislation for women. Legal regulation of women's hours, wages, and conditions of labor is often depicted as the handiwork of men who wished to exclude women from employment for wages, and even more often as an alternative to the self-organization of women into unions. Throughout their history, however, waitresses' unions were strong advocates of laws to restrict women's working hours, establish minimum wages, and improve the work environment. Because restaurants were omitted from coverage under the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act, women leaders of HERE continued to campaign for state laws applying only to women. Success in the long battle for a legal forty-hour week began to come their way only in the 1950s and 1960s, just as the struggle for the Equal Rights Amendment was about to reach its crescendo. That history helps one understand Myra Wolfgang's public denunciations of Betty Friedan and the ERA.

This does not mean that waitresses supported all measures ostensibly designed to "protect" women workers. They regularly opposed statutes that excluded women from working high-tip late-night service. They campaigned ardently against the prohibition of women from tending bar (a controversy that Cobble analyzes brilliantly). Some of their officers (not all) came to believe that minimum-wage laws undermined union-wage scales.

In general, however, the waitresses not only favored gender-specific legal regulation of wages, hours, and conditions, but also worked closely with the National Women's Trade Union League and the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor in drafting and lobbying for such statutes, and then in securing the appointment of their own people to the enforcement agencies. In this respect, their behavior resembled the historic strategy of coal miners' unions—using union power to win and administer legislation. There is an important lesson here: without effective unions there cannot be meaningful legislative reform of working conditions.

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By the 1970s, however, the circumstances within which waitresses had historically applied that lesson were fast disappearing. The rise of chain restaurants, fast-food service, and in-house training in techniques of waiting that set servers into competition with each other enabled new establishments to resist the union and made hiring from the union hall less advantageous to employers. By 1975 the proportion of unionized eating and drinking places was less than half what it had been in 1954. Moreover, year-round, full-time waitresses constituted scarcely one-fifth of the soaring number of people serving food for wages. It seems as though every city had its episode of some popular restaurant dismissing "granny waitresses" in quest of a new image of "personality and pulchritude."

Among union members, discontent with restaurants' gender division of labor swelled, and younger members, irate about the veterans' defense of established ways, simply stopped participating. Many activists among them turned to the courts or the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission for redress of their grievances, and they often filed their charges against both employers and the union. A federal court in Washington ruled in 1972 that both gendered job descriptions and separate locals for women were in violation of the law (*Evans* v. *Sheraton Park Hotel*). The era of waitresses' unions had ended.

In articles she has published Cobble has been more forthcoming in drawing lessons from this rich and complex experience than she is in *Dishing It Out*.* A revival of unionism on the waitress model is unlikely, because of both the steady transformation of hotel and restaurant union practice to something closer to the prevailing worksite model of most unions, and the severe restrictions placed by the Taft-Hartley and Landrum-Griffin Acts on craft union practices. Moreover, the revitalization of HERE so evident in its recent struggles in Las Vegas and San Francisco (where non-white workers now constitute most of the active membership) has suggested that the boycott weapon and the mobilization of support from other unions, on which waitress locals had once relied, can be made effective against huge establishments with up-to-date managerial techniques.

Cobble's question of whether labor can "appeal to the growing female-dominated service work force" or is "historically and irredeemably linked to the anchor of the blue-collar male worker" found a partial answer in HERE's own experience at Yale University. There a clerical force, comprised largely of women, found ways to mobilize itself on a large and complex work site, with the indispensable aid of an older union of blue-collar (mostly) males.

The waitresses' understanding that the union flourishes not so much in its contracts as in its members' hearts and minds remains as valid as ever. Moreover, although no single model of organizing can suit the needs of all workers, there are many settings, in the service sector and elsewhere, where a style of unionism that collectively enforced standards of acceptable employment practice attached to the individual worker, rather than to the place of employment, may again provide the most effective means of resisting the downward pull of free market economics. The union waitresses have much to teach us. □

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* "Organizing the Postindustrial Work Force: Lessons from the History of Waitress Unionism," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 44 (April 1991), pp. 429–36 and "Rethinking Troubled Relations between Women and Unions: Craft Unionism and Female Activism," *Feminist Studies*, 16 (Fall, 1990), pp. 519–30.

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Irving Howe

THE PAST RECAPTURED

THIS I CANNOT FORGET, by Anna Larina. Introduction by Stephen F. Cohen, translation by Gary Kern. W.W. Norton, 1993. 384 pp. $24.95.

> *And on this side and that—*
> *The bones of Russians,*
> *How many there are!*
> *Vanechka, do you know how many?*

Daughter of a prominent Bolshevik intellectual, Anna Larina was twenty years old when she married the forty-five-year-old Bolshevik leader Nikolai Bukharin in 1935. As a little girl delighted by Bukharin's playfulness and charm, she had looked forward to his visits to her father. By the 1930s Bukharin had completely lost political power to Stalin; he was allowed to hold government posts on condition he not criticize the policies of The Boss, as Stalin's fearful subordinates called him. Like most former oppositionists, Bukharin was now a broken man politically and perhaps psychologically too—though his adoring young wife did not see this. Now 79 years old, she still does not.

Bukharin had been a major Bolshevik figure during the 1920s, close to Lenin, greatly liked within the party, and respected, even by opponents, as a theoretician. In the late 1920s he led the "Right Communist" faction arguing against Stalin's forced collectivization of Russian agriculture and favoring a relatively moderate social course that retained much of the NEP (New Economic Policy) inaugurated under Lenin in 1921. Bukharin proved to be ineffectual as a factional leader and was easily routed by the Stalin apparat. In fact, ever since he had sided with Stalin against the Trotskyist "Left Opposition" in 1927, Bukharin's political—as later his personal—fate had been sealed. He was at the mercy of The Boss, and how much mercy The Boss would show we all know.

In late 1936 Larina gave birth to a boy, only a few months before Bukharin's arrest in February 1937 on the preposterous charge of heading "a gang of spies, terrorists and thieves." These charges were of a piece with those that had already been used to destroy major Bolshevik figures in two previous show trials. Convinced that he had only a short time left, Bukharin wrote a letter "To a Future Generation of Party Leaders," defending his innocence. He asked Larina to memorize this letter, because it was unsafe to keep a written copy. With a strength that reminds one of Turgenev's heroines, Larina learned to recite the letter by heart, murmuring it to herself in the camps, prisons, and exile where she would spend the next twenty years. Only during Gorbachev's time, when Bukharin was "rehabilitated" by the Communist party, did she make the letter public.

Larina was arrested shortly before Bukharin's "trial" (at which, with subtle dialectical skill, he outwitted the infamous prosecutor Vyshinsky by admitting to the absurd general charges while refuting the particular ones). While a prisoner in a camp, Larina heard of her husband's death at the hands of the secret police. Her baby, hardly a year old when she was arrested, was taken away from her and placed in an obscure orphan asylum. Some twenty years later he was found by a courageous relative and then, at age twenty, he undertook a long journey to the Siberian town in which his mother was exiled. There followed a spontaneous recognition scene of mother and son. For years thereafter they worked together in behalf of Bukharin's rehabilitation.

This I Cannot Forget will take its place among the scores of memoirs composed by survivors of the Gulag. Larina was a strong person, with decent and humane impulses, utterly loyal to the memory of Bukharin (although that loyalty serves to limit her understanding of what happened to him and his fellow Bolsheviks in the years of Stalin's terror). The best part of her memoirs consists of reports on her experiences in the camps and prisons, told with much flair and even a few touches of humor. Let me cite a few:

Interrogated by an NKVD (secret police) official named Skvirsky, she was forced to listen to fabrications he thrust before her: "We know for a fact that your marriage was a fiction to cover Bukharin's counterrevolutionary ties with young people." She denied this, and her interrogator—one of the Neanderthal types—burst out: "Shoot her! Shoot her! Shoot her!" A bit later, back in her cell, she could feel happy for a moment, "satisfied with my revolt in defense of human dignity."

In that solitary cell Larina became friendly with a rat that kept visiting her. "Every day, to the surprise of the prison guard, I would feed it some bread." The rat learned to beg for the bread—and that provided companionship of a sort.

Her memory working freely in prison, Larina recalled an incident from the time she and Bukharin were still free. In the summer of 1935 at the dacha of Maxim Gorky "an old hanger-on, a palm reader"

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took the hand of Grenrikh Yagoda, the first chief of the NKVD during the years of Stalin's terror (and soon himself to be one of its victims). The palmist said to Yagoda, "You know . . . you have the hand of a criminal." Yagoda turned red.

Once during her time as prisoner, as if to mimic an incident in Dostoevsky's life described in his *House of the Dead*, Larina was sentenced to be shot, taken out of her cell, and led to a ravine. Suddenly a voice cried out, "[T]urn them back, turn them back." The Boss was resourceful at inflicting gratuitous suffering on his victims.

Larina records a long interview with the third chief of the NKVD, Lavrentiy Beria. He fancied himself rather a gentleman, speaking politely and offering her grapes, but at the end, in a burst of rage, he shouted: "You blab too much. If you want to live, then shut up about Bukharin! If you don't shut up, then here's what you'll get," whereupon Beria aimed his right forefinger at his temple. (Ah, but history has some compensations, for it was Beria who would be the one to "get it.")

Larina also remembers kindnesses. Exiled in the town of Astrakhan, she and the wife of General Yakir (most of the top officers of the Soviet army had been arrested and would be killed) were mounting a train to be transported to a camp. Lazar Ortenberg, an elderly relative of Sarra Yakir, came with them to the Astrakhan station. "An old man striding with effort, supporting himself with a cane, and looking at us with mournful eyes. . . . He tossed his cane aside [when the train began to move] and ran as hard as he could alongside us. . . . He removed his hat, despite the freezing temperature, and used it to wave farewell to us."

Politically, Larina's memoirs have little to offer, since she remains locked within the worldview of her husband's version of Bolshevism. At no point does it occur to her to ask whether the dictatorship Bukharin helped to create after the October Revolution might have laid the foundation, at least in part, for Stalinism. But when one considers the suffering that has filled her life, one can understand this.

Larina sees Bukharin as a pure-spirited man, an innocent unable to grasp what Stalin was up to in the late 1930s. It is hard to believe this. Bukharin had been part of the Bolshevik regime that suppressed the Mensheviks, the anarchists, and others in the early 1920s; he had acquiesced, however uneasily, in the persecution of the Trotskyists in the late 1920s; he must have had a pretty good idea of what Stalin was really like. The Kremlin was hardly a plausible locale for innocence. Perhaps Bukharin had not wanted to upset his young wife by telling her what he knew; or perhaps he was himself sick at heart upon watching what had happened to that "new world" the Bolsheviks promised to create.

One thing more. In 1935 Bukharin was sent by The Boss to Paris, and Larina accompanied him for part of the time. Bukharin's mission was to negotiate the purchase of the Marx-Engels archive from the German and Austrian social democrats. In Paris Bukharin enjoyed himself; he loved the city. The negotiations, conducted mainly with two veteran Mensheviks, Fyodor Dan and Boris Nicolaevsky, came to nothing. Some time later Nicolaevsky published in the organ of the emigré Mensheviks a lengthy and sensational "Letter from an Old Bolshevik," which vividly recounted the horrors of Stalin's rule and was generally taken to be the work of Bukharin. The "Letter" was used against him in his show trial. Nicolaevsky would later admit that he had himself written this "Letter," but insisted that it reflected the sentiments of an unnamed Old Bolshevik.

Now Larina bitterly denies that Bukharin did or could have spoken to Nicolaevsky as the latter claims. (What would have been so terrible if he had?) She charges that "Dan and Nicolaevsky consciously helped Stalin tighten the noose already drawn" around Bukharin's neck. This is a very grave charge to make against two men, now dead, who were figures of unquestionable integrity, whatever one may think of their political views. Larina offers not the slightest evidence for her charge nor a speculation as to why the two Mensheviks, long principled opponents of Bolshevism and critics of Stalin's methods, should have wanted to help him by "tightening the noose." It seems a pity that this unsubstantiated accusation should mar a touching book. □

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Richard Wolin

FRENCH INTELLECTUALS AND COMMUNISM

PAST IMPERFECT: FRENCH INTELLECTUALS, 1944–1956, by Tony Judt. University of California Press, 1992. 358 pp. $30.00.

There are many who will view Tony Judt's *Past Imperfect* as a rearguard action. After all, the moral condemnation of French intellectuals for their utter credulity about communism in the late 1940s and the early 1950s is about as challenging as shooting fish in a barrel. There are also many who will accuse Judt's rather prosecutorial study of seeking to promote a type of "lustration" of long-dead French intellectuals—the intellectual equivalent of the ban on ex-communists from political life in the states of Eastern Europe. Of course, there are important distinctions to be kept in mind. For where Eastern European intellectuals abetted a lawless regime, their Western equivalents—fortunately spared the responsibilities of power—can only be accused of gross naivete and incredibly poor judgment.

Moreover, for over two decades the French have been engaged in a vigorous "coming to terms with the communist past" at home and abroad. After all, this was the land where the publication of Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* in the early 1970s resonated like a bomb blast. It was in the wake of these sensational revelations that a spirit of strong, left-liberal anti-communism emerged—the so-called "new philosophy" of André Glucksmann, Bernard-Henri Lévy, and others—leaving true believers few and far between. And following its brief honeymoon with the newly elected Socialist government in 1981–83, the French Communist party's fortunes have plummeted dramatically. At present, it is little more than a quaint anachronism.

Why, then, all the fuss about the political myopia of a near-forgotten generation of French intellectuals, among whose chief offenders one would have to include Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Emmanuel Mounier, the founding editor of that venerable organ of the Catholic left, *Esprit*?

Plausible as they may seem, most of the foregoing objections would fail to do justice to the merits of Judt's important study. For one of the great services Judt has performed has been to embed his political exposé in a larger narrative concerning the long-standing deficiencies of French political culture; deficiencies that continue to haunt French intellectual life to the present day. Thus, although the litanies concerning the virtues of Marxism have all but vanished, in Paris today there still reigns a brand of *cultural radicalism*, a style of philosophical chic, that is loath to associate with anything as pedestrian as democracy, political liberalism, or the language of human rights.

If one scans the writings of the reigning Parisian avant-garde—that is, the texts of the successors to Barthes, Lacan, and Foucault such as Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-François Lyotard—one discovers a continuation of the politics of illiberalism by other means. The political radicalism of the earlier generation has transmuted into cultural pseudoradicalism. This fashionable genre of *Kulturkritik*, instead of denouncing the sins of capitalism and "bourgeois roaders," now rails against the tyranny of "binary oppositions," "logocentrism," "consensus," the "code," "discursive regimes," and so forth. By a strange twist—which seems less strange after reading Judt's narrative—a traditional left-wing hostility to the values of political liberalism has been preserved in a sublimated, cultural guise. The Parisian spirit of philosophical anarchism may have internalized the anti-authoritarian ethos of May '68; yet it has stopped short of assimilating the basic political lessons of the critique of totalitarianism: namely, a renewed appreciation for the values of the civil libertarian and democratic traditions. As the French might say, *plus ça change*. . . .

However, the strengths of Judt's book do not lie in its orientation toward the present. Instead, they are to be found in his appreciation of certain "peculiarities" of French historical development. Such peculiarities, which Judt attributes to a "vacuum at the heart of public ethics in France," played a key role in ensuring that the intellectual hostility directed toward the Third Republic in the 1930s was, after the war, maintained toward the Fourth. Appropriately enough, he characterizes his study as "an essay on political irresponsibility."

Judt reminds us of just how tenuous the political legitimacy of the Third Republic was in the 1930s, especially among the intelligentsia. It was unloved by those on both the right and the left, with capable supporters from the center few and far between. After all, this was the pusillanimous regime that had failed to intervene on behalf on the republican cause in Spain and that had countenanced the shame of Munich. It suffered an ignominious dénouement with the "strange defeat" of July 1940—a collapse

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that, to many, served as a confirmation of the Republic's inherent inability to govern.

The Republic's fall was greeted by many French men and women with glee, and the Vichy regime was naïvely celebrated as a "National Revolution" that provided the opportunity for a new beginning. The political tenor of the decade was well captured in a remark made in 1937 by the fascist writer Pierre Drieu La Rochelle: "The only way to love France today is to hate it in its present form." Intellectuals on both the left and the right "felt a distaste for the lukewarm and were fascinated by the idea of a violent relief from mediocrity."

The mood of the liberation era was captured by Sartre's celebration of "engagement" in his treatise *What is Literature?* The events of war and occupation had served to cure even the aestheticist, free-floating intelligentsia of their alienation from politics and history as realms of "unfreedom." The European conflagration had thus caused the "transcendental illusion" of freedom shared by Sartre and others before the war to die a hard death. From now on, existential freedom was to be realized *in the world*, or it would not be realized at all.

But this *résistantialiste* premium on "action" also resulted in a problematical resuscitation of the French revolutionary tradition: of the belief that, so tainted were all inherited (read: liberal democratic) political values and parties that only a revolutionary *effacement* of their legacy could produce the desired renewal. This was a logic from which communism, as the self-proclaimed heir to the Jacobin tradition, profited greatly. Moreover, the emphasis on revolution as a categorical imperative of modern politics harmonized well with the Manichean "us versus them" ethos of the Resistance.

It was the Resistance that fostered the political ennoblement of the French Communist party (PCF), according it a legitimacy it had previously been unable to attain. Once again, historical memory proved short and selective—the "collusion among tyrants" of the Hitler-Stalin pact was quickly forgotten. Instead, the glory of Stalingrad seemed a confirmation of communism's intrinsic worth, and the PCF was more than happy to bask in its glow. Thus, strangely, it was the communists alone who managed to emerge from the chaotic era of war, resistance, and collaboration with their honor unscathed. Not until decades later would their cutthroat behavior vis-à-vis competing factions of the Resistance come to light.

It is against this historical background that Judt weaves his saga of intellectual culpability. The political myopia he seeks to unmask manifests itself in a variety of ways. First, there were the intemperate demands for wholesale retribution against collaborators—demands for "political justice"—raised by the ex-*Résistants*. In the words of former Prime Minister Edouard Herriot, as a prelude to national regeneration, "France must first of all pass through a bloodbath." Simone de Beauvoir was of a similar mind, ominously observing that "certain men did not have a place in the world we sought to construct." The notion of a regenerative purge of traitors and counterrevolutionaries, of course, had a dubious place of honor in the French revolutionary tradition. But despite all the inflammatory, neo-Jacobin rhetoric, the number of collaborators who were actually executed was remarkably small. As Judt points out, many of the most vociferous advocates of postwar activism—Sartre, de Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty, and Mounier—were among those who had a weak record as *Résistants*. With good reason he speculates, "Many of the most adamantly *résistantialiste* of France's postwar intellectuals were compensating for what in retrospect they may have felt had been the shortcomings in their own role during the war."

The well-nigh unanimous intellectual support for the postwar political purges among the newly Stalinized regimes of Eastern Europe is another scandalous episode. As Judt shows, left-wing intellectuals, by virtue of their blind trust in the "necessities of History," proved capable of justifying every kind of excess. Especially tragic was their refusal to speak out against the indiscriminate "cleansings" in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. In the Czech case, beginning in 1948, some two hundred thousand Communist party members were purged during a mood that culminated in the notorious show trial of former party secretary-general Rudolf Slansky, along with thirteen cohorts, ten of whom were Jews. Of course, throughout Eastern Europe the purge of potentially disloyal communists had been preceded by a ruthless elimination of socialists, clergy, and other political undesirables.

The manner in which the procommunist intelligentsia reacted to reports concerning the Soviet camps was highly indicative. For Merleau-Ponty, such revelations inspired a reversal of the course he had charted since his abysmal 1946 defense of the Moscow trials, *Humanism and Terror*. When confronted with evidence concerning the Soviet *univers concentrationnaire* in 1950, he would write that such facts "put altogether into question the meaning of the Russian system."

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Sartre, however, remained unmoved. In 1952 he could observe: "We may be indignant or horrified at the existence of these camps; we may even be obsessed by them, but why should they embarrass us?" In other words, scandalous though the camps might be, Sartre elected to view them as an excrescence that in no way threatened the essence of communism or the Soviet system. It was a position that he would maintain as late as the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. Thus, while in *The Ghosts of Stalin* he condemned the repression of Imre Nagy's breakaway soviet republic in Hungary, he insisted that the Soviet invasion had left the progressive nature of communism unimpugned.

Impressive as Judt's efforts to unmask left-wing pieties and delusions are, the execution of his argument has its flaws. He fails to give enough credit where credit is due to those dissident voices on the left who, already in the 1950s, had proffered critiques of Stalinism that today remain exemplars of the genre. Here, I'm thinking of the intellectuals around *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, such as Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort, and *Arguments*, such as Edgar Morin and Kostas Axelos. It was, after all, Lefort who had called Sartre to account in the pages of *Les Temps modernes* with his essay "Le Marxisme et Sartre" (1953), which provoked a lengthy, unconvincing reply from Sartre himself. Judt argues that the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group remained relatively uninfluential. That's true, but that doesn't make their position any less right or compelling (the group's residual Trotskyism also puts Judt off).

Another oversight is the omission of a sustained discussion of Merleau-Ponty's formidable 1955 treatise, *The Adventures of the Dialectic*, which remains one of the most powerful philosophical indictments of Bolshevism ever written (especially its devastating last chapter, "Sartre and Ultra-Bolshevism"). But I suspect that such a discussion would have been too much at odds with the thesis of Judt's book, which focuses entirely on the political myopia of left-leaning intellectuals. What is significant about Merleau-Ponty's awakening, however, is that it begins in the years 1949–50; that is, well in advance of the more common jumping-off point, 1956, which saw both Khrushchev's attack on the "crimes of the Stalin era" at the Twentieth Party Congress and the October Hungarian Revolution.

Finally, while Judt's talents as a historian are outstanding, his credentials as an analyst of philosophical texts show their weakness at times. In an exposition of Sartre's 1943 philosophical magnum opus, *Being and Nothingness*, we read the following: "every 'en soi' collides with another 'en soi,' since each is a sovereign and 'total' source of meaning about the whole of experience." Yet for Sartre the "en soi" refers to inert matter or "things." It is the "pour soi"—*l'être humain* or human being—that is the ultimate "source of meaning" in Sartre's early philosophy.

Moreover, in a book that is so much concerned with the political morality of the existentialists (or the lack thereof), there is inexplicably no discussion of Sartre's important 1947–48, six-hundred-page project for an existentialist ethics, *Cahiers pour une morale* (recently published by the University of Chicago Press as *Notebooks for an Ethics*).

Such relatively minor carping notwithstanding, one can safely say that it is thanks to the integrity of an Anglo-American scholar that the French have been properly chastened concerning their recent past. □

Jeffrey Scheuer

VISION VERSUS TELEVISION

DIRTY POLITICS: DECEPTION, DISTRACTION, AND DEMOCRACY, by Kathleen Hall Jamieson. Oxford University Press, 1992. 335 pages. $25.

In a perfect world, the media wizards who spawned Willie Horton would be out of business. But these propagandists are just one feature of a larger crisis of democratic capitalism: the interpenetration of politics, television, entertainment, and wealth. The mixture of cash 'n' camera has eroded civic discourse and brought about what Todd Gitlin calls "an eerie politics of half-truth, deceit, and evasion in which ignorant symbols clash by night."

This crisis has two dimensions: the spending side and the spinning side. On the spending side, money talks—mainly the language of television. On the spinning side, television itself is, for structural as well as commercial reasons, a formidable instrument of propaganda.

The 1992 election signaled some hope for reform of campaign spending. But even if that is accomplished, television will still dominate the political process; its complex effects on political consciousness and behavior will continue to demand critical scrutiny.

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Dirty Politics, Kathleen Hall Jamieson's study of electronic politics, treats how television corrupts discourse once the cash flows. Beginning with a lengthy discussion of the infamous 1988 Willie Horton ad, Jamieson sees television as an essentially non-rational and propagandistic medium: one that grants "Svengalian powers" to the makers of political discourse. It bypasses rationality, appealing viscerally and subconsciously, hence manipulatively; it "makes analytic processing of rapidly emerging claims all but impossible."

One aspect of the problem is the blurred boundary between advertising and news. Ads borrow news techniques that give them a specious legitimacy; and, less constrained by conventions of accuracy, they are able to use the medium to fuller effect. At the same time, television news stories home in on controversial political ads in ways that accord them free and often uncritical exposure. Few of those stories question the truth or fairness of the ads; false claims "are legitimized by being aired without correction." In short, all discourse becomes "ad-like."

Jamieson observes that political ads (like commercial ones) are assertive rather than argumentative and rely on highly selective evidence, if any. They personalize, dramatize, visualize; "Because they are brief assertions based in dramatic narrative and/or example. . . . they also favor the simple over the complex." She identifies some of the propaganda techniques that political ads use: apposition (equating one candidate with everything good, the other with evil); displacement (responding to charges by matching one's opponent in manipulation and bombast); contextual reframing; and so forth. And she indicts the news media for focusing on campaign strategy and ignoring issues, which reduces viewers and readers to mere spectators "evaluating the performances of those bent on cynical manipulation."

Jamieson maintains that three things are lost in this debasement of public discourse: argument (linking data to claims), engagement (comparison of rival claims), and accountability. The problem isn't that political ads are negative; it's rather that they aren't critically, comparatively, and truthfully negative. The media, as Roger Ailes notes, "are interested in pictures, mistakes, and attacks."

Her answer to the "strategy schema" is a "problem-promise-performance schema" based on a logic of argument and evidence. This ideal is worthy if somewhat vague (as are the means of achieving it); we do need more evidence, argument, and accountability. But while making political discourse more like legal discourse might clarify and verify factual claims, it would only address part of the problem. It wouldn't adjudicate, or even expose, the underlying moral-political values. To fully deconstruct a discourse one must also expose its *normative* logic. Politics isn't just about evidence or reasons; clashing visions and principles, as much as factual truth, are systematically cloaked in American political debate.

Jamieson exhorts the press to abandon the "strategy schema." She urges more accountability for the content of ads and hopes that more states than the current eighteen might pass statutes governing campaign conduct. But radical remedies, such as mandating response time, though potentially fair, would encounter constitutional barriers. Basic change is more likely to come not from strikes of legislative lightning, but from change in the political and social climate.

Underlying this critique of the media, however, is the basic character of the electronic image: the defining features of television, which make it so powerful a vehicle of propaganda. The printed word is an inherently discursive medium, in which fallacies, falsities, and fantasies are relatively transparent. Television, by contrast, offers a plethora of cosmetic tools: pacing, cutting, montage; short, densely symbolic statements and images; sound, music, and voice-over; lighting, color, set design; camera angles and positions; live, recorded, and animated action. Not least, there is the sheer rapidity with which television can convey information, overwhelming the critical faculties of the viewer.

Television is thus inherently more adaptable to propagandistic ends. Television's "multiple modes," Jamieson contends, and its "powerful ability to orient attention can invite strong, unthinking negative responses in low-involvement viewers [and] can short circuit the normal defenses that more educated, more highly involved viewers ordinarily marshal against suspect claims." By implication, it is most effective on the most volatile and pivotal political audience: those who lack strong ideological convictions.

Television can pair unlike images and ideas, or decouple like ones; it can juxtapose unrelated or subtly related ideas, such as Dukakis and the furlough program (or Boston Harbor). Ideas can be conveyed nonverbally that would seem absurd, even bigoted, in discursive form. The electronic vocabu-

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lary is artificial, encrypted, and insidious; it rewards the vivid, punishes the abstract, and "simplif[ies] the world into Manichean dualities [that] merchandise our hopes and fears."

Ranging from strategic political analysis to communication theory to historical survey, *Dirty Politics* inevitably comes up short in some respects. There is no single clear theme or chronological structure, and far too much anecdotal evidence. Jamieson might better have confined her casework to the 1988 campaign—or even better, to Willie Horton. The book is also riddled with minor errors of fact and style, as if written on the fly.

Toward the end of *Dirty Politics*, Jamieson confronts a nagging question: does it really matter if discourse is dominated by hype, deception, and propaganda? "What's lost," she asks, "in a world in which everything's an ad?" Her answer is that "the likelihood that campaign rhetoric will prophesy conduct in office plummets." This is a mechanistic view; a higher level of discourse might make government not just more predictable but also more responsive, democratic, efficient, and humane. Moreover, there are enormous risks in living in a culture saturated by falsification. What Jamieson misses is that a more sophisticated discourse presumes not just wiser journalists and politicians, somehow liberated from the imperatives of profit and power, but also a more sophisticated and engaged public.

It does matter how truthful our political conversation is—and especially to progressives, whose values are, implicitly, far more reliant on the compelling powers of rationality, complexity, and argument. For reasons that Jamieson and others have suggested, television's aversion to abstraction and analytic depth—above all its simplifying nature—make it inhospitable to those values.

Amid the bombast, sensation, and hype, it is still possible to find intelligent political debate on television and in print. Whatever their faults, shows such as "The MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour," "Nightline," programming on C-SPAN, and a wealth of publications offer substance and ideas (if not vigorous ideological combat), largely free of the filtering effects of profit and propaganda. The problem, for which the media are partly responsible, isn't the lack of such dialogue; it's the willingness of so many Americans to settle for less. Public disgust with the media, for example after its frenzy over Bill Clinton's private life, tends to be uninformed and counterproductive, a strain of know-nothingism, failing both to hold the media to a higher standard and to recognize its critical surrogate function.

Ideally, political discourse would be propaganda-free, yet still allow for heated partisan debate. It would demand maximum accuracy and completeness of statements, and banish all symbols or devices intended to manipulate the audience. Utopian?

The problem is that electronic politics doesn't just depart from this ideal of antipropaganda, it's antithetical to it. There is no simple way of shifting on that spectrum without raising standards of public education and critical thinking. To propagandize is human—and to watch television is all too human. But if the ideal represents a fairer, more truthful, less coercive form of public communication, then shift we must. □

Gary Gerstle

STRANDS OF REFORM

STRUGGLES FOR JUSTICE: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE LIBERAL STATE, by Alan Dawley. Harvard University Press, 1991. 538 pp., pb., $14.95.

The veneration that surrounds the name of Franklin D. Roosevelt causes us to forget that, in his time, not everybody loved the man. To some of his opponents, he was downright evil. It was bad enough that this country squire had turned on his class by siding against the "economic royalists." But his unforgivable sin was doing so in the name of liberty. He "stole" liberty, the most cherished word in the American political vocabulary, from its rightful owners and imbued it with a meaning it was never supposed to possess: social welfare, social security, the government as protector of the weak and capitalism's stabilizer.

Roosevelt, of course, did not singlehandedly rip American liberalism from its laissez-faire moorings. The transformation of American liberalism occurred over a period of fifty-odd years, beginning with the late–nineteenth-century agrarian and labor revolts against concentrated capital and the laissez-faire state, continuing with the rise of progressivism and socialism in the early twentieth century, and concluding with the 1930s establishment of the New Deal. Recounting this saga was once regarded as a great challenge, and some of this country's ablest historians, notably Eric Goldman and Richard Hofstadter, turned their talents to the task. Goldman's *Rendezvous With Destiny* (1952) and Hof-

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stadter's *The Age of Reform* (1955) were among the most influential historical works of their time.

No one, however, has attempted to tell this story in almost forty years. The 1960s and 1970s were a time of revolt against both liberalism and grand political narratives. New Left scholars' attacks on liberalism as corporate capitalism's handmaiden made this philosophy seem an unappealing subject of study, except to those intrigued by how the powerful used it to subdue the weak. Widespread disillusionment with American democracy—especially because of its perceived exclusionary character—gave rise to the conviction that political history hid from view the history of most Americans. A remarkable grass-roots project, known by the name of "social history," developed among young left-leaning historians intent upon rescuing from oblivion the lives of countless anonymous Americans, especially those who had been marginalized for reasons of class, race, or gender. These rescue efforts tended to focus on everyday affairs rather than affairs of state, on local communities rather than nation-states, on culture and society rather than politics, on historical problems rather than personalities. In the enthusiasm for the particular, the everyday, and the "problematic," grand political history disappeared from view.

So, too, did a sense for the whole of American history. The explosion of knowledge about workers, blacks, women, and other subaltern groups, and the growing awareness of how different these groups' historical experiences had been, made generalizations about the American past exceedingly difficult to formulate. A vocal minority of historians has viewed this fragmentation as an appropriate, or at least inescapable, condition of our postmodern world. Many more historians, however, have been distressed by this development, and some have begun to turn their efforts toward integration and synthesis.

This is not a task for the faint-hearted. It is not clear whether it is possible to integrate all that we now know into a coherent view of the American past. But one strategy that has scored some impressive successes has been to select a key political episode in American history and to rethink it in light of the relevant social history. Eric Foner has done this in his magisterial *Reconstruction*, as has Steve Fraser in *Labor Will Rule*, his epic story of America's confrontation with the "Labor Question." Alan Dawley now joins their ranks with *Struggles for Justice*, a remarkably ambitious and accomplished study of American liberalism's twentieth-century transformation.

What first strikes the reader about Dawley's book is its narrative and analytical range. The amount of information Dawley has organized into a spirited narrative is simply extraordinary. He vividly retells the important stories of corporate capitalism's rise, the economic and social dislocations it caused, and the protest movements—progressivism, socialism, labor, feminism, Prohibition, the New Deal, the CIO, etc.—it brought into being. He is as alert to the changing patterns of family structure, sexuality, schooling, acculturation of the foreign-born, leisure, and consumption as he is to transformations at the workplace. He gives serious attention to the international consequences of America's industrialization, from the nation's initial bid for empire during the Spanish-American war to its attempt to shape a liberal capitalist world order and contain communism after the Great War. As if this were not enough, Dawley embarks on lengthy excursions into German history and the history of the American south, as part of his effort to delineate the distinctive characteristics of American industrial society. I can think of no other book on twentieth-century American history that covers so much ground.

The theme that holds this sprawling history together is what Dawley calls the imbalance between society and the state. Industrialization intensified the polarities of class, gender, and, to a lesser extent, race, and overwhelmed the country's relatively weak governing system. This system, founded on the principles of classical liberalism—separation of powers, checks and balances, strict constitutional limits on the exercise of governmental authority—worked as long as the state could be considered the chief threat to personal liberty. But when the mighty corporation usurped the state's role in this respect, the inadequacies of the American governing system were starkly exposed. The American state possessed no mechanism for mediating capital-labor conflicts that, by the second decade of the twentieth century, had become the largest and most violent in the industrialized world. Nor was it prepared to deal with the convulsions in gender roles and sexual practices triggered by the mass exodus of young working-class women out of their homes (and beyond the patriarchal gaze) and into the public world of work and play.

Dawley shows us how the figure of the New Woman haunted the nation's imagination as much as did Eugene Debs, Big Bill Haywood, and the specter of revolution. Independent of mind and body, sexually frank and assertive, politically active in

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movements for feminism and birth control, these new women threatened to overturn the "natural" order of things. American reformers and reactionaries left no stone unturned in their efforts to "rescue" American womanhood from these sirens. They introduced "protective legislation" in statehouses to make the conditions of women's work more appropriate for the weaker sex's delicate nature. They conducted countless campaigns against vice and for social hygiene, and worked themselves into a frenzy about the "white slave traders" who were pressing innocent girls into prostitution. They pushed for woman suffrage, not out of a commitment to equality but because of their belief that women's special virtues—especially a capacity for moral judgment—would redeem a political process badly shaken by male corruption. In Dawley's wake, no one will attempt to write about the convulsions of industrialism and responses to it without putting gender at the heart of the story.

The three political movements of the early twentieth century—progressivism, managerial liberalism, and the New Deal—must be understood, Dawley argues, as efforts to contain class and gender antagonisms, to reform the governing system, and restore balance to society. Each strategy originated with elites, Dawley argues, but they differed in their openness to popular participation and their attitudes toward state power. Dawley's clear favorite is progressivism because of its commitment to the "government regulation of society in the public interest" and because it welcomed the participation of democratic forces—"wage-earners, professionals, urban smallholders"—united in their pursuit of social justice. "It was a loose shambles of an alliance," Dawley admits, "but it captured the political initiative down to America's entry into the Great War."

In World War I, however, progressivism gave way to managerial liberalism, a faith set forth by enlightened capitalists who recognized the need for reform but who wanted to limit the powers of a democratic state that appeared too susceptible to popular control. Of them Dawley writes: "They invented welfare capitalism as the alternative to state welfare, touted scientific management as the solution to waste, proposed corporate philanthropy as the alternative to public expenditure, and argued that the cure for poverty was raising productivity, not redistribution of wealth." These welfare capitalists were not averse to government assistance, especially once war mobilization revealed the profits to be gained from government-business cooperation. Their visionary leader was Herbert Hoover. Drawing on his wartime experiences as director of the U.S. Food Administration, Hoover began calling on the government to use its powers to help corporations organize themselves in the interests of efficiency, marketing, and profits. As secretary of commerce under Calvin Coolidge and then as president, Hoover proved to be the most innovative and successful managerial liberal of his age.

In one crucial respect, however, this modern managerial man was still gripped by nineteenth-century orthodoxies. Although he had relieved corporations of the need to be self-reliant, he refused to extend the same courtesy to wage-earners. The specter of the dole haunted him. Any sustained resort to welfare, he believed, would destroy American individualism.

Even as the country slid into the Great Depression and millions found themselves without jobs or shelter, Hoover could not bring himself to support federal relief. This refusal is what made Hoover appear so indifferent to popular suffering and opened the door to a Moses who promised to deliver the people from their Pharoah. As Dawley points out, what chiefly distinguished Roosevelt's early New Deal from Hoover's New Era was not the NRA, the AAA, or other economic recovery programs (virtually all state-capitalist schemes, which were offshoots of Hooverian policies), but the massive commitment to federal poor relief and job creation. In other respects, the first New Deal, in Dawley's telling, simply continued the task of constructing a state-capitalist system.

The story of the New Deal, of course, has another chapter, which is the last in Dawley's book. Though the early reforms failed to trigger recovery, they did raise popular expectations of government action, which, in turn, reinvigorated labor and populist protest. Fearing for his re-election, Roosevelt opened his administration to popular influence. In his speeches he now assailed "the malefactors of great wealth," and in his legislative proposals he sought to increase labor's power, extend the social welfare state, and redistribute some portion of the nation's wealth. This democratic moment of 1935, 1936, and 1937 was never as promising as the one preceding World War I had been. Dawley is particularly good at showing how conservative attitudes about "woman's place" were inscribed, without protest, into welfare law. Still, the democratic forces managed to check the power of elites, enhance the power of subordinate groups like labor, and restore "political balance" to a "system all out of kilter."

If this Second New Deal was not quite America's

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"rendezvous with destiny" celebrated by Eric Goldman, it was nevertheless an "exquisite compromise between mass interests and elite privileges" that "forever changed the dynamics of American civilization." Corporate liberty had been restrained in the name of social security.

Dawley's generous appraisal of the Second New Deal reflects a renewed appreciation of this reform movement's achievements, a re-evaluation impelled in no small measure by the experience of living through a long, harsh decade of Republican rule. In his effort to portray the New Deal as a contest between elite and popular forces, and to show how democratic possibilities opened and closed as political power shifted from one group to another, Dawley shares a great deal with Steve Fraser, Nelson Lichtenstein, Ira Katznelson, Kenneth Davis, Alan Brinkley, and others who have been writing on this subject in recent years. Dawley's work, like theirs, is political history of a high order, far more sophisticated than simple-minded celebrations of the New Deal as democracy triumphant or condemnations of it as the handiwork of corporate elites.

More so than any of these other historians, however, Dawley insists that the country's "liberal inheritance" shaped the political character of the New Deal settlement. Dawley respects this inheritance. He discerns in it an egalitarian streak that workers, women, blacks, and other disadvantaged groups have used to good effect. He believes that the liberal suspicion of state power spared the United States the kind of tyranny that Hitler brought to Germany. Liberalism, too, he argues, has been remarkably flexible, able to incorporate elements of different ideologies and thus to adapt to governing systems as different as the Gilded Age and New Deal states.

But Dawley also finds in liberalism's influence a brake on socialist and social democratic programs. When backed by a powerful political movement, radicals and reformers could sometimes force the government to restrain the power of capital and to strengthen its social obligations. Even at such moments, however, anticapitalist and social-welfare initiatives were usually weakened before gaining legislative enactment. The constitutional and popular commitment to liberty remained too great, the suspicion of state power too entrenched.

This cautionary tale is obscured somewhat by Dawley's choice of upbeat words like "exquisite," "beauty," and "beacon" to characterize the breakthroughs of the New Deal. Dawley is a bit of a functionalist at heart (he might prefer the term Gramscian), and these adjectives are meant to convey his admiration for the political balance and equilibrium that the New Deal restored to the nation. But this functionalist emphasis should not be allowed to deflect attention from Dawley's sobering history lesson: namely, that the liberal state's improperly high regard for private property has made a historic mess of social policy. The aversion to industrial planning; the circumscription of labor's rights; the compromising of welfare programs through incomplete coverage, inexpert and inefficient public administration, and reliance on private, profit-making institutions for service delivery: all these problems were present in the New Deal settlement itself. They were hidden, or rendered inconsequential, by the extraordinary stretch of economic prosperity that buoyed American society from 1945 to 1973. Now that we no longer live in such luxury, however, we are forced to confront, once again, the painful inadequacies of our governing system. □

Stanford R. Ovshinsky

MANIPULATION OF MINDS

A NATION OF FLIERS: GERMAN AVIATION AND THE POPULAR IMAGINATION, by Peter Fritzsche. Harvard University Press, 1992. 282 pp. $27.95.

A Nation of Fliers examines the rise of aviation in Germany, from its beginnings through the eve of World War II, to illuminate the relationship between technology and culture during the Nazi period. It is not only an interesting book but a profound one.

We take it for granted that technology is somehow the base of modern society, yet insufficient attention has been paid to how technology shapes our society and culture. How, for example, have technological advances shaped popular attitudes toward war?

Radicals have never felt quite comfortable going beyond their tradition's standard explanations as to the causes of war. But the accepted wisdom—that capitalism and imperialism inherently lead to war—sheds little light on how dominant groups foster ideological hatred within their societies.

Peter Fritzsche, a historian at the University of Illinois, presents a case study in the manipulation of popular culture. The Nazis prepared a nation for war in part by uniting the classes around symbols of aggression. The soaring, magical field of aviation

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offered images to which everyone in Germany could respond—socialists as well as Nazis. But it was the Nazis who seized the moment to forever change the character of mass destruction.

Tennyson in 1842 presciently posed the dilemma between the possibilities of science and technology and their potential for destruction:

> Saw the heavens fill with commerce,
> argosies of magic sails
> Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping
> down with costly bales;
> Heard the heavens fill with shouting,
> and there reigned a ghastly dew
> From the nation's airy navies grappling
> in the central blue

Aviation, of course, was only one of the areas of popular culture on which the Nazis put their stamp. But in Fritzsche's hands it becomes a sort of magnifying glass on the Nazi manipulation of the German mind.

Fritzsche shows how the idealistic and creative impulses of German youth, intertwined with nationalist sentiment from the beginning, were twisted further in that direction by the Nazis. It is well known that German youth across the political spectrum embraced mystical and romantic beliefs in the period between the wars. One might have thought, however, that the movement that embraced technology would have had a primarily leftist base—after all, the idealization of the industrial worker, the smokestack, and the tractor is considered to be a hallmark of the Old Left. What is often forgotten is that the Italian futurists, with their mechanical orientation, were also predecessors of the Fascist movement, and that Mussolini preached a corrupted version of syndicalism in order to appeal to the Italian working class.

The appropriation of idealistic and noble aspirations by Fascism need not come as a surprise. After all, the cross has been turned into a bloody hatchet throughout history in religious wars.

Each Fascist country, whether black, red, or brown, used aviation as a symbol of its new world. The Nazis were the most accomplished in this, because they tapped the deepest springs, and because their appeal reached a wide constituency across class lines.The beginnings of aviation in this century brought not only the airplane and the glider but the distinctly German giant dirigible, which captured the imagination of Germany. Having looked up as a child in Akron, Ohio and seen giant dirigibles such as the Akron and the Macon floating in the sky, it is not difficult for me to understand how such airships could capture the public imagination.

In the 1920s, in Europe as in America, pulp magazines were filled with the derring-do of the World War I aces, those cavaliers of the sky who, with daring, skill, and chivalry, shot down their enemies. This mythology—a modern version of the hand-to-hand combat of the old warrior class—provided a new romantic hero who could transcend the agonies of trench warfare. This new icon was nowhere more celebrated than in Germany, where a monster like Goering, who was a popular aviation war hero, could become one of the leading figures of Nazism.

One could not romanticize a tank, but the soaring gliders and airplanes in the heavens could engage a spectrum of feelings—foremost among them, nationalistic pride—and serve as a most effective form of weaponry at the same time.

Many idealistic, hobby-driven young men of post–World War I Germany, cut off from the use of airplanes by Allied restrictions, turned to the art of gliding to keep aviation alive in that battered country. In its early days, gliding combined individualist strivings with the camaraderie of the youth nature movement then popular in Germany; at the same time its appeal was strongly nationalistic in that it was a symbol of how, despite great difficulties, Germany would rise again to its rightful place in the world. Its appeal was not limited to the right: socialist working-class youth also played an important role. There were even Jews and women prominent in the gliding movement. But, as Fritzsche shows, this pastime—which drew on individualism, personal initiative, and small-group cooperation—became the basis of the new Luftwaffe when the Nazis, upon their seizure of power, channeled these initial strivings into rigid, centralized, totalitarian organizations.

Fritzsche's discussion of the glider movement does much to explain how Nazism captured the minds of young Germans. Conventional historical emphasis has dealt extensively with the effects of the economic crisis of the Weimar Republic and the impact of totalitarian philosophy on working- and middle-class Germans. But, for the Nazis to succeed, they had to go beyond the appeal of blood and soil, the demonization of the Jews, and the call to avenge their defeat in World War I. They did this in part by showing that technology could help Germany reassert its leadership in the world.

The Nazis also pointed to the new technology to evoke fears among the population—fears that

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technology could then allay. Through skillful propaganda, the Nazis persuaded Germans that they were vulnerable to air attack from all sides—including, though it is hard to believe, Czechoslovakia. The horror of air warfare was hammered into the German psyche through mass drills and propaganda campaigns until it became a self-fulfilling prophecy when the Nazis began to "preempt" these dangers by destroying any cities within their reach.

In several ways the Nazis' use of aviation paralleled their use of radio. Could Hitler have succeeded without his mastery over the radio waves? Just as Germans could hear the message of their superiority broadcast constantly over the radio, so too could they look to the heavens for signs of German greatness and the reaffirmation of German power.

By tracing the history of German aviation from its innocent beginnings in the work of brave and creative inventors to the death and destruction that rained from the skies, Fritzsche has given us an important, thought-provoking study. □

Letters, *continued from p. 398.*

with child "neglect." As a result, thousands of children are torn from the parents they love, and those parents are branded child abusers, because the family has no home, or the food stamps ran out, or a child was left alone while a single mother worked to stay off welfare.

Ruling on two lawsuits, one of them brought by the ACLU Children's Rights Project, State Supreme Court Justice Elliott Wilk has found that New York City routinely takes away children from impoverished parents because of homelessness or poor housing conditions. A New Jersey study found that 25 percent of the foster children in Newark were in care because their families were homeless. And in California, homeless families were denied shelter unless they surrendered their children, until a lawsuit put an end to the process.

At least half the children now languishing in foster care—more than 200,000 children—could safely be in their own homes if proper services were provided. But financial incentives at the federal and state levels encourage needless removal of children. The federal government spends at least eight times more on foster care than on programs to keep children out of foster care.

The problem is worsened when private agencies like those Rosner and Markowitz wrote about get into the act. New York City reimburses these agencies on a per diem basis. As soon as the agency returns a child home, the money stops.

The warehousing of children in foster care to keep the money flowing was documented in a six-part New York *Daily News* series in May, 1975. Regrettably, little has changed. As part of a recent lawsuit brought by Bronx Legal Services, a social worker stated in a sworn deposition, "I have recently been advised by a foster care agency caseworker that her facility had imposed a three-month moratorium on discharges, because it was not receiving sufficient referrals to fill its beds."

Intensive family preservation programs, which emphasize rent subsidies, child care, and other efforts to ameliorate the worst effects of poverty, must become the centerpiece of the system. To do that, financial incentives must be reversed. Federal aid for foster care should be capped, then phased out, with the funds transferred to family preservation. And definitions of neglect must be narrowed to make it more difficult to confuse poverty with neglect.

RICHARD WEXLER
Albany, N.Y.

The writer is author of *Wounded Innocents: The Real Victims of the War Against Child Abuse* (Prometheus Books: 1990). □

Genuinely Radical

Editors:

The death of Irving Howe leaves me momentarily at a loss as to whom I address this letter—DSA? his family? the literary community at large?

For me the answer is *Dissent* itself, with its long history, full of that creative controversy that marked Howe himself, the child he, perhaps more than any others, brought into the political scene.

Good heavens yes, there were disagreements, sharp, painful, and sometimes profound. Is any other kind of genuinely radical and perceptive political life possible? We are richer for his many dissents and affirmations.

He accomplished a very great deal in his time among us. My condolences to the editors, to his family, and to the organization to which he contributed so much, Democratic Socialists of America.

DAVID MCREYNOLDS
New York, N.Y.

The writer is co-chair of the Socialist party USA □

Erratum

Our apologies to Todd Gitlin and *Contention*, the journal of the history department of UCLA, for not noting that Gitlin's essay on identity politics in our Winter 1993 issue was excerpted from a longer essay, "From Universality to Difference: Notes on the Fragmentation of the Idea of the Left," published in the Winter 1993 issue of *Contention*.

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Labor Relations

Editors:

Richard Rothstein sets out a useful labor-law reform program (*Dissent*, Spring 1993) that would bring about noticeable improvements in the dire condition of labor. Nevertheless, Rothstein's proposals are unduly narrow in scope and fail to deal effectively with some of the crucial problems facing American workers.

Surprisingly, Rothstein does not explicitly mention one of the most immediate, and problematic, issues on the labor-law reform agenda: management's aggressive drive (implicitly backed by the Clinton administration's Reich Commission) to repeal the provision of the National Labor Relations Act that prevents employers from dominating or assisting labor organizations. This fundamental protection is now deemed an obstacle to labor-management cooperation and the almighty pursuit of "competitiveness." In fact, repealing this provision, or "reforming" it away, would cause very serious harm—allowing employers to defeat organizing drives by setting up phony "committees" to defuse worker grievances and, even worse, to break down the distinction between labor and management and breed a new form of corporatist company unionism.

Rothstein's sanguine comparison of current labor-management cooperation schemes to West German works councils is fundamentally misleading, both because many unionized employers clearly use such schemes to break unions (Du Pont) or impose speedups (General Motors) and because nonunion employers have no intention whatsoever of ceding power to their workers. This highly partisan, if not irresponsible, view of labor-management cooperation also appears in the articles by Jo-Ann Mort and Harold Meyerson in the same issue. *Dissent* readers deserve and *need* a more probing exploration of these problems.

Perhaps even more important, Rothstein's program gives no attention to the needs of nonunion workers. (Of course, his ideas for improving union organizing law would certainly help some nonunion workers—but with under 12 percent of the private sector workplace organized, it would be hopelessly optimistic to imagine that nonunion workers will not remain the great majority for the foreseeable future). Perhaps the single most basic reform would be a universal guarantee against dismissal without good cause—a guarantee provided by almost all union contracts, but still next to nonexistent for the unorganized. For a variety of practical and technical reasons, designing an effective mechanism to ensure "good cause" protection might prove difficult. Reliance on government agencies like the NLRB or EEOC risks underenforcement due to budget cuts and hostile administrations; reliance on private lawyers and the courts risks ossification, delay, and insufficient access for low- and moderate income workers. There is also the problem of federalism; the leading proposal, partially endorsed by the AFL-CIO, involves a Uniform Employment Termination Act that would be adopted piecemeal, state by state, probably with considerable variations once fifty legislative processes had done their work. Whatever the complexities, though, this is a crucial issue that has to be addressed, not least because employers will continue aggressive resistance to unionization if unionization imposes expensive legal restrictions from which nonunion employers are completely immune.

Finally, in a journal that rightly "avoid[s] the provincialism of the immediate," as Irving Howe put it, it is disappointing that Rothstein does not risk more fundamental suggestions for change. If *Dissent* will not propose eliminating the bans on secondary boycotts, hot-cargo agreements, and sit-down strikes, or simply making it illegal for employers to close American plants and reopen slave-labor factories abroad, who will? Labor law in Clinton's America will never amount to much, and socialism, market or otherwise, may not be around the corner; but we should at least plan and hope for something better.

WILSON MCLEOD
Sierra Madre, Calif.

Richard Rothstein Replies:

Wilson McLeod sees an aggressive drive by management to repeal the employer-domination provision of the NLRA, but I'm not aware of it. Some management consultants are trying to stir up such a drive, but, given the NLRB's and courts' tolerant view of most labor-management cooperation schemes, corporate leadership is quite happy with the way things are, and is not likely to try to rock the boat with an aggressive drive to change anything in the NLRA.

In the view of the Wagner Act (and McLeod) labor relations are entirely adversarial. In the view of some contemporary labor relations experts, labor relations should be only cooperative. The challenge facing most unions today, however, is how to enhance productivity with cooperation while winning a fair share of the benefits of that productivity with confrontation.

Legislating workplace rights (like a universal just cause standard) is far less preferable than reforms that expand union density and power. Without a workers' organization

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in the workplace to enforce such a right, the benefits of a legislative solution will, as with so many other attempts to substitute substantive reform for collective bargaining, benefit mainly lawyers and upper management, not workers. The failure of the recent WARN bill (requiring 60 days' notice of major layoffs or plant closures) to provide any meaningful benefit for workers should be a caution to those who think that legislating rights can benefit workers if they are without the power of a union to enforce those rights. □

History

Editors:

May I offer a footnote to Maurice Isserman's account of the fate of Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter, the two leaders of the Polish Jewish Socialist Bund, who were murdered by Stalin (*Dissent*, Spring 1993). It is an endnote—about Erlich—a stunning denouement to one of the most famous remarks of the twentieth century, an episode that we can now rescue from the dustbin of History.

The setting is John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World*, the book that created one of the most potent myths of modern revolutionary history. It is the night of November 7th, 1917. The Congress of Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies is opened in the great meeting hall of the Smolny Palace. The Mensheviks, led by Martov and Dan, warn that one party alone cannot seize power, otherwise the revolutionary democracy will collapse and civil war erupt. But the speakers are hooted down by soldiers brandishing their rifles. Reed writes:

> Then came Abramovitch for the *Bund*, the organ of the Jewish Social Democrats—eyes snapping behind thick glasses, trembling with rage.
>
> "What is taking place now in Petrograd is a monstrous calamity! . . . Our duty to the Russian proletariat doesn't permit us to remain here and be responsible for these crimes. Because the firing on the Winter Palace doesn't cease, the Municipal Duma together with the Mensheviki and Socialist Revolutionaries, and the Executive Committee of the Peasants' Soviet, has decided to perish with the Provisional Government, and we are going with them! Unarmed we will expose our breasts to the machine guns of the Terrorists. . . . We invite all delegates to this Congress. . . ." The rest was lost in a storm of hoots, menaces and curses which rose to a hellish pitch as fifty delegates got up and pushed their way out. . . .
>
> Kameniev [sic] jangled the bell, shouting, "Keep your seats and we'll go on with our business." And Trotsky, standing up with a pale, cruel face, letting out his rich voice in cool contempt, "All these so-called Socialist compromisers, these frightened Mensheviki, Socialist Revolutionaries, *Bund*—let them go! They are just so much refuse which will be swept into the garbage-heap of history."

But Reed had it wrong. It was not Abramovitch who had led the Menshevik-Bund delegation out of the hall, but Henryk Erlich. Though Reed's book was labeled an eyewitness account, he spoke no Russian, and many of his facts came from what he had been told or from next-day newspaper accounts.

How do I know about the confusion of individuals? As America's youngest Menshevik (in my time), it was one of my sad duties to write the obituaries of my elders. When Raphael Abramovitch, with whom I had been the co-editor of the *Modern Review*, passed away in 1963, I wrote a memoir for the *New Leader* and mentioned the account in Reed's book. The next day or so, I received a call from Alex Erlich, the elder son of Henryk, the author of the foundational work *The Soviet Industrialization Controversy*, who had become a professor of economics at Columbia University, telling me of Reed's mistake, and that it was his father who had been the object of Trotsky's scorn. To some extent, one can understand the mistaken identities. Abramovitch at the time had been primarily known as a *Bund* spokesman; both he and Erlich were short men, with Vandyke beards, and both were eloquent orators. Yet it was Abramovitch who had been enveloped in the swirling myths of Russian revolutionary history.

How many young orators on the soapboxes of revolution have consigned their opponents to the dustbin of history? And yet, irony of ironies, Abramovitch died peacefully in New York, though his son, Mark Rein, a journalist, had been murdered by the GPU in Spain in 1937. Erlich and Alter died in the cells of the NKVD in 1941. But Lev Borisovich Kamenev, liberated from Siberian exile in 1917, and the leader with Zinoviev of a faction opposing Stalin after the death of Lenin, was in the dock in the first Moscow Trials in 1936, and was shot shortly thereafter in the cellars of Lybiyanka. Lev Davidovich Trotsky had an ice-axe driven into his brain in 1940 by the Stalinist agent Jacques Mornard, who after twenty years in a Mexican jail vanished into Czechoslovakia and beyond. And meanwhile the garbage-heaps of history keep rising.

DANIEL BELL
Cambridge, Mass. □

Foster Care

Editors:

David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz do a fine job of explaining how institutional racism, in the most literal sense, has contributed to the plight of foster children in New York City ("Race and Foster Care," *Dissent*, Spring, 1993). But discrimination in access to foster care services is only one piece of a much larger puzzle. The greater tragedy is that many of the children Rosner and Markowitz write about never needed to be in foster care at all.

Broad, vague, laws enacted as part of a national panic over child abuse make it easy to confuse a family's poverty

Continued on page 396.

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